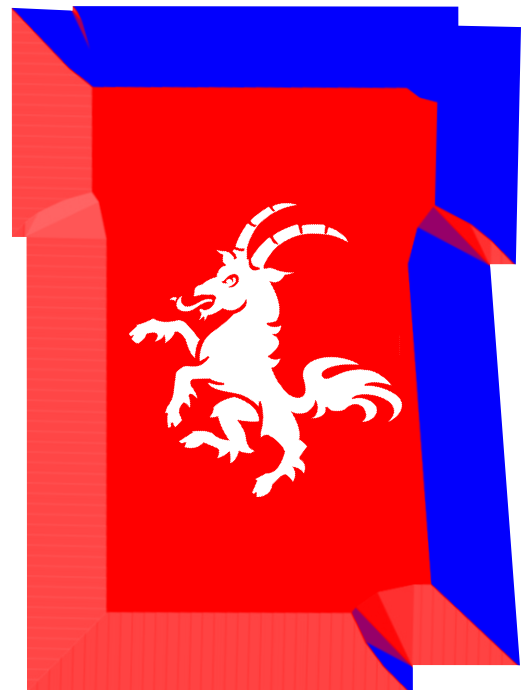


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Letter from the Editor

I used to make a lot of playlists in high school. I would pick a theme and carefully select and order a list of songs from my iTunes library. The process was a lot like the one I'm supposed to do for my radio show here at Yale, but I've never once had my act together like I did back then. Still, I have a number of pretty decent playlists saved to my computer that I listen to when the occasion arises including: "Space!," "Diners and Old Time Ice Cream Parlors," "REVOLUTION," and "Modern Day Mythos." I know some of those names sound overly pretentious (I was, without a doubt, overly pretentious in high school), but they're good playlists! I promise. In fact, I just listened to a song today that I need to add to my space playlist immediately ("Electric (feat. Khalid)" by Alina Baraz).

My "Space!" playlist includes songs exclusively about outer space (metaphorically or literally), but I also have playlists from different road trips I've taken through the years, a playlist for riding the bus at night (also good for driving at night), a playlist about bodies of water, and a playlist entitled "ghost towns // ghost riders" which is all music about my conception of The West: cowboys vs vampires (don't correct me). What I'm saying is that I put thought into how music relates to physical spaces.

At Yale, music takes up different spaces at different times and for different purposes. I would suspect it most commonly takes up only the space from the earbud or headphone to the inner ear drum as people listen to study beats while pulling an all-nighter or music to keep them awake as they walk to class post-all-nighter. Then there's music as it fills up space at parties. I don't go to frat parties much, but I know that songs with pounding bass lines are a must (feel free to correct me if I'm wrong, but fair warning that I do not care if I am misrepresenting Yale's fraternity scene. Sorry, boys). Every party I have ever helped throw has had a curated (or at least semi-curated) playlist to accompany it, anything from pop hits of the early 2000s to 1940s big band swing music depending on the party, of course. Occasionally, we, the over-busy Yale undergraduate population, get out to see live music. Big ups to WYBC for throwing Ante-Fling, the coolest concert of the year, every year, even making Toad's an almost pleasant place to exist. The way that music sounds (and feels) live is a totally different experience from listening to a recording. Is the singer a little pitchy? No matter because I'm losing myself in the unmediated guitar riffs and drum solos. As Joan Jett would say, I love rock 'n' roll.

Now I'm thinking about that one video of the astronaut covering David Bowie's "Space Odyssey" on an acoustic guitar in space. How wild is it that that actually happened? He brought a guitar with him! To space! And his supervisors let him! I think that alone makes NASA far and away the coolest government agency (although that is not much of a feat under this administration). I'm also now realizing that I don't think "Space Odyssey" is actually on my "Space!" playlist so I need to go correct that immediately because is there a more iconic space song than that? Maybe Bowie's "Life on Mars," which I also have not added to my playlist because I am clearly out of my mind. Shame on me, but at least now I've realized the error of my ways and can remedy the situation moving forward.

I realize this is a bit of a disjointed letter, but I'm really just trying to see where "space" takes me. Much as I've been a little all over the place, the pieces within this issue of *Relatively Dark Blue Neither Purple Nor Green*, range from the mundane to the erotic to the extraterrestrial and take up the concept of Space in some way, so please read on and enjoy.

Radio is dead,

Emma Keyes
Editor-in-Chief

(Long live radio.)

SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK ALIEN

Peter Nekrasov

Rudy and Jana sat in the front of their spacecraft, zooming at the speed of sound. They had already been traveling for two months together, but they were still a long distance away from their home planet of KUNI. They were ambassadors sent to the distant planet of WLOP to make sure their broadcast was up to code. Finding everything okay, they were finally heading home.

A tense moment had just passed: Rudy finally proclaimed his love for Jana, to which Jana replied that she already had a lover, who lived on KIDA. It was now quiet between them.

"Want to listen to the radio?" Jana asked, attempting to diffuse the awkwardness. Rudy did not answer, concentrating on the ship's control panel. Jana fiddled with the dial, scrolling through countless options: KLON 91.785 "Space Rock" which Jana only really enjoyed when she was alone, KQQQ 92.787 "Cygnus Hits" which played dreadful contemporary hits, and KMOO 92.791 "The Moon"—broadcasted from an actual moon in the Andromeda Galaxy. What an uninspired name, Jana thought to herself. The radio receiver on their spacecraft was able pick up radio micro-frequencies that were broadcasted across a few different galaxies. Their home planet KUNI hosted 99.245, and it played ambient techno—they called it "Higher Intelligence Dance Music"—but neither of them were in the mood to dance. Continuing to scroll through the stations in search of something suitable, Jana stumbled upon a station she had never seen before: 92.956. No call sign appeared on the screen.

"92.956. Do you know where that is?" she asked.

"I have no idea," Rudy replied.

All they could hear was bizarre vocalizations of female voices singing in reverse over the foreign sounds of acoustic guitars. What a nightmare, Jana thought to herself.

"Is your radio broken?" she asked.

"It better not be," Rudy replied. "It's new, I installed it just before we left."

Jana wished she could listen to her true favorite singer, a woman by the name of Lina Cat. Jana could listen to her voice for hours, swooning over her melodies. Lina reminded Jana of her lover ON KIDA; they always stayed up late listening to Lina and talking about their plans for the future. In this way, Lina's music had a sentimental value to Jana. Unfortunately, the spacecraft was too far away to tune in to her station, and Jana was too far away from her darling.

When Ximon and the rest of the Kidans touched down from space, they did not make a sound. They were careful to land in an empty field in Indiana, where there was no possibility of being spotted by civilians or UFO hunters. The spacecraft sat in the wheat field for a few brief minutes as the Kidans and their recording equipment unloaded onto the grass.

Their initial aim had been to simply tap into the mass data flow to intercept information that could be useful in understanding the newly discovered human race. While they did bring a few cameras, they believed that the most crucial elements to understanding a species all had to do with sound: the language of the people, the music of its culture, the quality of their voices. But there was also an immense beauty in their experience of new sounds, and on a personal level, Ximon and the Kidans listened because they were fascinated by the artistry in everyday things. Before they landed, they watched the globe sitting with a quiet hum, vibrating unknowingly, present in the collective force of millions of small noises: car alarms, rustling leaves, conversations. They wanted to record

the harmony of noises and relay it to the public intersphere by turning the planet into a station, as they had done with their home planet of KIDA and countless other celestial bodies. To the Kidans, it was all music.

The Kidans have several listening probes built into their organisms, ears tuned beyond regular sound frequencies. While they could hear normally, like humans, they could also hear radio waves and convert the information into sound. Their brains allowed them to broadcast and communicate to each other using radio frequencies, but only over short distances, so they brought all the equipment they needed in order to turn the planet into a radio station and broadcast its music to the surrounding galaxies. Although Earth already had plenty of radio stations set up, the Kidans could not tune in to the waves unless they were in close proximity to a transmitter.

The Kidans migrated from the wheat field toward a highway, where they deployed one of their jet-propelled vehicles. It looked nothing like the humans' automobiles, and they were very much aware of their conspicuousness, but they were safe using the vehicle so long as there were no other cars on the road.

After driving for 2 hours on Route 74, Ximon grew hungry and convinced the group to stop at a nearby convenience store. Ximon and two others walked in, prepared to gawk at the unfamiliar Lays chips and Coca-Cola. They were surprised to hear music playing inside—the song was "Barbie Girl" by Aqua, which had just last week become a number one hit. To the Kidans, the song sounded like a shameless imitation of Lina Cat's "Two Hearts, One Star," a catchy bubblegum song from Cat's dance-pop period. For this, Ximon thought, I will not even bother to take out my recording equipment. Ximon grabbed bags of chips and candy bars off the shelves, prepared to devour anything he could find. Unfamiliar with Earth's system of monetary transaction and not having any money to begin with, Ximon

walked straight out of the store, his alien countenance unsettling enough to convince the cashier not to stop him. Stuffing his face with junk food, Ximon reentered the vehicle, put a Lina Cat cassette into the tape deck, and thought about home.

Unable to withstand Earth's high-friction, gravelly road, their car broke down somewhere near Urbana, Illinois. Not having any other options, they took out their audio equipment and abandoned the car in a ditch. It was late at night, and walking across the town they mostly saw corn fields and white-picket fences. On Springfield Avenue, they encountered a group of college-aged kids on their way to a party. Ximon approached them and asked them where they were headed, and one of the kids told him they were going to a show at his friend's house. Kind enough not to question the alien's appearance, the kid invited Ximon and his friends to come along. The Kidans looked at each other, and then Ximon told them (via radio communication) that it was okay, that these people seemed trustworthy enough.

It was a 15 minute walk, and when they got to 704 West High Street, they were greeted by a few kids smoking and drinking on the porch. It looked like any other old midwestern house—a quaint little home with white siding and a walkway. They went around to the back of the house where some band was playing live music: fast-paced adrenaline-soaked punk rock. Kids with spiky hair and Converse were dancing to the music. The Kidans hardly knew what a concert was—separated across wide intergalactic distances, the Kidans only experienced music through radio transmission. But they were amazed to find that they were witnessing a ritual surrounding the live generation and direct delivery of new sounds. Ximon set up the audio equipment and began recording surreptitiously, while the others took part in the ritual, doing what felt natural: moshing and thrashing with the human kids. The way Kidans danced was a bit different, their entire bodies vibrating

with their arms splayed out in all direction. Even though they stood out, the Kidans still managed to fit in through their appreciation of the music.

After the punk band finished their set people stood around chatting and drinking beer as a few kids moved guitar amps around in preparation for the next act. The next band to perform was called The One Up Downstairs; though their style was much different from the previous band's—they opted for cascading guitar arpeggios rather than distorted power chords—the poignant songs were a product of the same time and place: what it felt like to be a kid growing up in the Midwest.

Of course, all this was lost on Ximon and the Kidans, but they nonetheless deeply enjoyed the music of that night. The Kidans had entirely different instruments, most of them electronic in nature with antennas and oscillators—probably most closely resembling the earth instrument, the theremin. Guitars and drum sets were foreign to them, and so their initial aim to experience human culture began intersecting with their interest in technology as they examined the instruments and relayed their blueprints back to KIDA. Ximon was once a somewhat prominent electro-folk musician back on KIDA, and so he examined the band's instruments with great curiosity and delight.

Ximon and his group migrated towards the West in search of new sounds. In Kansas they heard The Get Up Kids, in Texas they heard Spoon, in California they heard Weezer. Their proclivity for good music brought them to all sorts of curious places—bars, concert halls, grocery stores. The simplicity of their obsession with music made them amiable aliens, that is, when they weren't stealing the musicians' instruments. Though they danced kind of funny, they made many friends along their quest who showed them to concerts and gave them cassette tapes. They even got to meet some of the musicians personally—during the middle of a mediocre show by a Led

Zeppelin cover band in a bar in Sante Fe, Ximon and his friend got up on stage and started singing along with the band before hijacking the microphone. Needless to say, Ximon and his friend were kicked out of the bar, even though they thought they were helping the band out.

On their tour of the West, Ximon found a spot in the desert where they could finally set up the radio transmission. He drilled holes into the ground, then erected the module and secured it with titanium bolts. He then dialed in the tower's operating frequency, in accordance with the guidelines established by the Interplanetary Board of Interplanetary Transmissions. He slid a tape into the deck and began the tape transport at high-speed, checking the waveform on the visual scope. While Ximon could hear the radio broadcast coming up just fine, he also set up a nearby receiver to measure sound levels and check that the signal was undistorted. The receiver could also work so that the Kidans could modify the radio broadcast from afar and transmit data to Earth. Ximon connected to the audio transduction and relayed the signal, the sound of the Foo Fighters emerging from a speaker connected to the receiver. The visual scope indicated no distortion, no noise, no clipping. The channels were all balanced. 92.956 was up and broadcasting.

Now that the radio station was established, Ximon and his friends realized they would have to go back soon. A spacecraft was supposed to arrive next Friday at midnight to pick them up in the middle of the desert. Ximon and his friends would all have to say goodbye to 92.956 and board the ship to be taken back to their home planet of KIDA.

One day before they left, Ximon and the Kidans ended up at a show at the Troubadour, a popular nightclub in West Hollywood, located on the border of Beverly Hills. The venue was known for hosting legendary hard rock acts of the 80s, like Guns N' Roses and Poison. Tonight, a hot British band by the name of

Radiohead was performing. They had just released an album called *ok Computer*, which was very well received by critics and fans alike. Of course, Ximon and his friends were not aware of most of this. They found out about the show a few days before from a poster pinned to a storefront in Los Angeles. Seeing the word "Radiohead" on the sign confused Ximon: the Kidans had radios built into their heads . . . was this a wanted poster, offering a reward for the capture of the radio-transmitting aliens? Did the government become aware of the aliens, who had the capability of transmitting and receiving radio waves through their brains? Reading the date at the bottom of the poster (*June 13, 1997*), the aliens decided to show up to the Troubadour to investigate.

When they got to the show, they were pleasantly surprised by the performance. Shortly after they arrived, Jonny Greenwood, the lead guitarist of the band, walked on stage and began strumming a few chords on the guitar. After a few measures, Thom Yorke, the lead singer of Radiohead, walked out and began singing pristinely, and yet dramatically. He had kind of a weird appearance to him, Ximon thought, as he wore disheveled clothing and had a lazy eye. When he wasn't singing into the microphone, Thom danced eccentrically, with his arms noodling to the sides, very similar to the way the Kidans danced. That's odd, Ximon thought to himself. Ximon also couldn't quite decipher the band's lyrical themes: the first song seemed to be about some interstellar car crash, and the next song was about an anxious robot. It wasn't until the band performed the song "Subterranean Homesick Alien" that Ximon started to understand what was going on. During the song, Thom began crooning passionately:

*I wish that they'd swoop down
in a country lane
Late at night when I'm driving
Take me on board their*

*beautiful ship
Show me the world as I'd love
to see it.*

Ximon looked to his friend and then looked back at Thom. He's one of us, Ximon thought, Thom Yorke is one of the Kidans. This explained the poster and the name of the group and the band's lyrics: Thom Yorke had become separated from the rest of the Kidans and created the band as a way to find his species again and get back in touch with them. Thom Yorke was a "Subterranean Homesick Alien," and he was homesick for KIDA. Though Thom clearly tried to cover up his alien nature by wearing makeup and clothing, his true identity as a Kidan still showed by his odd appearance and his gauche (by human standards) dancing. Ximon recognized that only the Kidans could dance like wet noodles.

After the show, Ximon and his friends hatched a plan to rescue Thom. Their spacecraft was supposed to arrive to pick them up that night, so they had to move quickly. They stood outside the venue by the tour bus and waited until Thom got on. Then, they snuck onto the bus. After some confusion about how to operate the machine, one of Ximon's friends began to drive the bus away down Santa Monica Boulevard, toward the desert where they were to meet the spacecraft. Ximon then tried to speak to Thom. While Thom seemed somewhat confused, and did not recognize Ximon directly, he could tell that Ximon was an alien, so he seemed to welcome the encounter. Ximon, wholeheartedly convinced by the performance he witnessed at the Troubadour, did not ask Thom for any more proof that he was a Kidan. To some extent, Ximon believed that Thom was acting un-alienly due to post-traumatic stress; after being displaced from his home planet, Thom had forgotten the customs of KIDA and needed help becoming reacquainted with the language and culture. Ximon was more impressed by Thom's musical talent, and once they got to the desert,

Ximon and Thom and the rest of the Kidans boarded the ship and started their journey back home.

On the spacecraft, Ximon and Thom spent a lot of time discussing music and showing one another songs from their own cultures. Ximon showed Thom all of KIDA's electronic music synthesizers and interesting ways to modulate the sounds to form melodies. Thom and Ximon made lots of music together, and before they got back to KIDA, they assembled a set of ten songs. The set of songs was different from all of Thom's previous work with Radiohead: the album sounded incredibly futuristic and experimental, featuring sounds produced by Ximon's synthesizers and various samples of the aliens' singing.

After arriving on the planet and living there for a few years, Thom decided to beam the album to his bandmates on Earth through the high-rate receiver Ximon set up in the desert. Thom decided he wanted the album to be called KIDA, after Ximon's planet of course, but his bandmates seemed to misinterpret his message and labeled the album *Kid A* instead, thinking that the title was another one of Thom's obscure, self-congratulatory enterprises (whatever "Kid A" means!). Though the release would have probably been considered extremely mediocre on Ximon's planet, *Kid A* became pretty acclaimed on Earth. And while people on Earth were enjoying the album, no one even suspected that Thom was on a distant planet, far far from Earth, in a place called "home."

THIS MUST BE THE SPACE

Mark Rosenberg

My car is many things. When I put on “Lounge,” it’s a café with comfy lounge chairs and tattooed baristas. When I put on “Amp,” it’s a sweaty club filled with writhing bodies. When I put on “Up,” it’s a hot-air balloon drifting over golden fields. When I put on “Drive,” it’s back to the old green Subaru my parents got in 2000: mud flap torn to shreds and reattached with zip ties, aluminum foil shoring up the holes over the tires, speakers on their last legs.

I have seventy-seven Spotify playlists, at last count, many of which I update, edit, and cull on a regular basis. Each is intended to make me the sculptor of my domain. I’m neurotic in many things, but none more so than deejaying. When I plan the playlist for a party, I fret endlessly. Should I play this BROCKHAMPTON song a third of the way through the festivities, or two-fifths? Is Blood Orange sufficiently groovy, or excessively mellow? And how many Talking Heads songs is too many? I’ve always viewed being on the aux as a vast responsibility. “Grabbing” the aux, like taking the wheel of a car, is only just the start. After that, you’ve got to ease it into gear, commandeer it over twists and turns, and parallel park it. You’re the architect of the space. The steward of the vibes.

Or so I’d long thought. But in a TED talk recorded eight years ago (and watched by me only recently), David Byrne, the Talking Heads’ former frontman, argues just the opposite. At the start of his music career, Byrne explains, he played at small clubs like CBGB in the East Village. These shows teetered on the verge of bedlam: fans shouting, drinking, falling all over each other.

The music, in response, became more raucous. Later, when Talking Heads’ nihilistic, avant-garde music became world-famous, Byrne moved to bigger stages: Carnegie Hall in Manhattan, Disney Hall in LA. But his songs didn’t sound the same in these big, resonant spaces. “I asked myself, do I write stuff for specific rooms?” Byrne says. “Do I have a place, a venue in mind when I write? Is that kind of a model for creativity?”

Byrne goes on to argue that music has long been shaped by the popular venues of the era, from rapid rhythmic drumming outdoors to long choral harmonies in gothic cathedrals to frenetic jazz improvisation in clubs to slow rock ballads in baseball stadiums. When radio and recorded music were introduced, everything changed: singers could whisper directly into listener’s ears, while DJs could topple dancers like dominoes, pumping manufactured beats through speaker towers.

My parents’ Subaru, I realized, dictated the music I played (it’s past tense now; they traded it in last month) every bit as much as my playlists transformed it. The speakers were always kind of grainy, so I stuck to sparse songs with easily recognizable melodies; my memory could fill in the rest. The bass blew out a few years ago after I played a Tame Impala song a few ticks too loud, shifting my selection towards crisp vocals and high-pitched snares. (And eventually, the tape-deck aux converter I used stopped working, so I was pretty much stuck to a rotation of 88.9 WCRB, HOT 96.9, and grumpy Boston-accented sports talk show hosts.)

My common room is much the same. It’s malleable—but not so much because of the music I play. It’s more about the people in it. If the space is packed with sound-absorbing bodies, it’s more or less a CBGB situation: 808s and big bass drops are the only way to cut through. But when the room empties out, the same sounds clang metalically off the plaster walls. Then, I turn the volume down and stick to something more ambient.

I could play anything, of course, but I don’t. I listen to choral singing at a church every Sunday night; it wafts to the ceiling and washes over me. On a Beats boombox, it wouldn’t sound quite the same. My car or common room could become a club or café. But neither will ever be a cathedral.

John Williams

EPISODE I

Claire Haldeman

The theater is dark. The long heartbeat after the scripted parade of the previews, the anti-piracy announcements, the military recruitment videos, the 20th Century Fox drumroll, the Lucasfilm glimmer . . .

A long time ago, the stiff, cerulean, left-aligned text begins, *in a galaxy far, far away* . . . Nobody moves. Nobody breathes. The popcorn goes un-crunched, the sodas un-sipped.

For that single moment in the expansive artificial darkness, there is an oppressive, celestial silence. And then: *fanfare!*

In unison, the trumpets blare, the cymbals crash, the horns bellow. Even before the galloping baseline, and the triumphant ornamentation, and the tingling descant—all of it metallic and righteous—there is the immediately gratifying sensation of a final piece falling into place, even though the journey so far consists solely in a computer generated starscape. The junker cargo shuttle has fired up its engines, the pommel of a laser-derivative weapon has slipped into familiar hands, the Force is strong with this one. All of this high voltage excitement is bound up in a single, brassy beat.

It is this—the music—and not the stylized yellow font, which brands the *Star Wars* franchise onto the cultural body. It is not the unlikely hero-teen, the spunky droid friend, or the wacky hair-dos which make the *Star Wars* films so iconic. It is the musical current pulsing underneath it all.

Continued on page 11

SPACE JAMES Nicole Mo

Dear human friends,

In 1977, the *Voyager* spacecrafts rocketed into space on a mission to explore the outer solar system. NASA scientists, America's perennial alien geeks, included a message on a gold-plated phonograph record in case *Voyager* should ever be intercepted by extra-terrestrial life. Among sound-clips of bird calls and pictures of children is a collection of music—after all, little can convey our cultures and people as well as music can. The “Golden Record” contains tracks spanning from a Peruvian wedding song to Senegalese percussions, from Louis Armstrong to Beethoven and Bach. Carl Sagan did a decent job, but four decades of music-making have passed since *Voyager*'s launch and our intergalactic musical archives could use an update. It's an enormous task to identify a handful of songs that communicate the totality of human experience.

These songs, perhaps not the best or most important, are nonetheless what my friends and I think E.T. & co. would enjoy and find helpful in understanding our freaky species. So the following 15 songs are far from a diverse and thorough collection, but such an entirely subjective, inevitably incomplete list was bound to fall short. But the human experience is nothing if not entirely subjective and inevitably incomplete, right?

1 DON'T STOP 'TIL YOU GET ENOUGH (1979)

Michael Jackson

MJ won his first Grammy for this song, and for good reason. The heart-racing synths and exhilarating falsettos combined for an iconic dance jam that foregrounded the 80s and kicked off the King of Pop's legacy. Nothing brings people together like music and dancing—this song is a pretty good example of why.

2 ASHES TO ASHES (1980)

David Bowie

The bass riff on this track is layered with metallic, warpy instrumentals that lend some nonhuman adrenaline to the subtly elegiac, intimately human lyrics—an accurate embodiment of Bowie himself, perhaps recent history's best earth alien.

3 LITTLE RED CORVETTE (1982)

Prince

Look, we can't pretend that sex and cars aren't both embedded in contemporary pop culture. And, yes, aliens probably don't understand English, but Prince's ecstatic rock-funk track gets the point across nonverbally with the syncopated percussions, revved-up (read: turned on) vocals, and electrifying (read: erotic) guitar solo.

4 99 LUFTBALLONS (1983)

Nena

This undeniably catchy Cold War-era protest song tells the quirky, tragic story of children's balloons that, mistaken for UFOs, set off a 99-year war. Everything on Earth is tangled up in politics and war: hopefully the aliens will get the gist of that message, even if it's relayed in sunny, fast-tempo German.

5 EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD (1985)

Tears for Fears

In the words of my friend Kamau, “I just feel like it's human nature in a nutshell.” Not to mention, the 80s Brit pop-rock scene has certainly earned a spot in the interstellar with this classic sing-into-a-hairbrush, air-guitar-the-solo track.

6 FAST CAR (1988)

Tracy Chapman

Chapman's restraint in the verses gives way to the iconic, soaring, and idealistic choruses that we've all belted out along to. “Fast Car” is an intimate folk narrative with political undertones about the American Dream—a worthwhile song for E.T.s looking for a basic American history lesson and an emotional rollercoaster.

7 FADE INTO YOU (1993)

Mazzy Star

Simple pop with surprising resonance, “Fade Into You” for sure soundtracked many an angsty makeout session in the 90s. The haunting, ethereal track stirs feelings of melancholy and hope at the same time—it's a sad, beautiful track, and a dark horse contender as humankind's best love song.

8 THE WORLD IS YOURS (1994)

Nas

Nas arguably put New York rap back on the map, and “The World Is Yours” is a good indicator of why. Jazz sampling and trademark 90s scratching underlie the narratively brutal verses and empowering, titular chorus. Yeah, the aliens might mistake the title as a promise, but I'm kind of willing to take that risk.

9 WATERFALLS (1995)

TLC

TLC brought a band-defining swagger to Motown-era harmonies and soothing neo-soul. “Waterfalls” is a cool and timeless summer jam that adds a new dimension to classic girl group music, pulling back the curtain on another dimension of growing up in the modern age.

10 LONG SEASON, PT. 1 (1996)

Fishmans

A build-up of hypnotic, mystical instrumentals intertwines beautifully with trancy vocals that appear halfway through this jazzy, ambient dream-pop track. My friend Stefan thinks aliens would be best at minimalist music, if any genre, so hopefully they enjoy an offering of one of our best.

11 KARMA POLICE (1997)

Radiohead

Alt-boi favorites Thommy Yorke and the Radioheads are known for voicing generational, technological anxiety through unconventional, atmospheric rock. In the words of the front-man, “This is a song against bosses. Fuck the middle management!” How very human.

12 ONE MORE TIME (2001)

Daft Punk

Someone has to introduce intergalactic species to stylized autotune (at least of the human variety)—it might as well be the French electronic duo that presents itself as robots. Daft Punk was a major player in the ensuing decade-long reign of auto-tune. Love it or hate it, you can't get this dance-club bop out of your head once you've heard it.

13 MAPS (2004)

Yeah Yeah Yeahs

A classic love ballad in art-punk dress that was featured on Beyoncé's recent “Hold Up”, “Maps” blends tender lyrics with powerful guitar and a hysteria of percussion. Karen O & co. captured the turmoil and confusion of the aughts in this song about heartbreak and recovery.

14 POWER (2010)

Kanye West

Say what you want about Yeezy (and there's a lot to say), but he's carved himself a cultural legacy since he first surfaced as a producer. The aggressive nature of “POWER” makes it an unapologetic declaration of its creator's abrasive egoism, and an amp-up anthem for the rest of us, brilliantly narcissistic or otherwise.

15 TRUTH (2017)

Kamasi Washington

The most contemporary song Carl Sagan sent to space in '77 was “Johnny B. Goode,” Chuck Berry's song from almost 20 years previous. But I'm not Carl Sagan and I think recent songs can be trusted to have a lasting effect. Washington delivers a cosmic, climactic 13-minute jazz piece in this unsubtly named track. If aliens could understand (and appreciate) anything on this list, my money's on “Truth.”

MORNING SUNSHINE Ebony Bradwell

As time moves on my heart and mind hunger for your touch—the sweet taste of your romance. To be swept off my feet and laid in your grace is a past time pleasure I will forever desire. Breathless, I reminiscence. My eyes flutter as I lay in a bed of roses playing with the thought of you.

Half past midnight. At first glance the power in your presence moved me. The dark blue sky was calm. Words were lost . . . shivering chills ran through me. Pretty girls yell and scream and kick and fight for your delight . . . shackled and chained through dimensions; drunken spirits fought to break your beautiful mind. Oh my, it ran through me . . . the power in your presence. Earth-shattering and breathtaking. Is it real! Just a man, with the strength of a god. A good man, a loving man. A good man! Shamelessly I say, “Stay with me . . . cause you’re all I need. Stay with me!”

The silk smoothness of your rich chocolate revives me. It takes over me . . . Heart-pounding heat rises, deep inside our souls as our bodies collide. The strength in your touch sends my mind racing to a far hellish place! A soft blue sky, precious white doves swiftly move through the clouds. Humming hymns of praise . . . “I like me better when I’m with You . . . I like me better when I’m with you.” Your Hershey’s kisses . . . “I can’t tell you. . . no I can’t tell you. I can’t tell you why!”

Drowning in the bed, soft cashmere caresses me. My soul sings “Can I lay by your side, next to you . . . You. And make sure you’re alright. I’ll take care of you. I don’t want to be here if I can’t be with you tonight. The feelings overwhelm me

it’s much too strong. Can I lay by your side! Lay . . . me . . . down . . . tonight. Lay me by your side . . . Lay me down tonight . . . Lay me by your side!”

You are the sunshine in the sky. I adore you. The music we make plays softly. My heart sings . . . “Amazing Grace how sweet the sound . . . that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I’m found. Was blind but now I see.” Amazing Grace how sweet the sound!

Just as innocence laughs out loud, my soul sings and smiles at the heavens feeling the touch of your grace. “Beauty we were making. I can’t disturb the ghost of you. Sometimes I wish we never built this palace. But real love is never a waste of time.” In the heavens and down on earth divine thoughts of you are with me!

“I still long the ghost of you.”

John Williams EPISODE II

Claire Haldeman

Without the music, *Star Wars* is a campy geekoid allegory thrown like a Pollock palette into the cosmos. It is puppets, and man-skirts, and stilted dialogue.

But through music, *Star Wars* is able to transcend the pimply, melodramatic sum of its parts. The score is inextricably woven into its tapestry of cultural achievement. George Lucas wanted a space opera, and a space opera he got. The best thing he ever did for his franchise was hire John Williams.

Mr. Williams is The Force, I am fairly certain. His power underlies everything that happens in the galaxy far, far away, driving both the good and the evil. At 86 years old, he seems to be timeless. And, most importantly, he keeps coming back to muck around in the action (almost certainly for the better).

He is able to use his uncanny gift to create a score which crafts a cinematic experience it would otherwise be hard to take seriously (oh no the bad guys are building *another* Death Star?) into an epic of bravery and heroism which has imprinted itself into the cultural cannon. The *Star Wars* soundtrack is not so beautiful and transcendent that it loses its mass appeal, but neither does it preclude sobriety. It has so successfully infiltrated the public imagination because it adds emotional depth and nuance to the films while remaining accessible and energetic.

Continued on page 12

John Williams

EPISODE III

Claire Haldeman

Inspired by the operas of Wagner, Williams uses leitmotif to highlight the cyclical role of specific characters and tropes and moods, while using the flexibility of music to allow these ideas to evolve. “The Force Theme” arcs from delicate to powerful. “The Imperial March” slows with solemnity. The ornamentation atop “Han Solo and The Princess” sometimes sweeps romantic and other times twitches playfully. All of the themes and motifs—from Yoda’s to the Emperor’s—track the action in a way that is both complex and comprehensible.

This operatic approach is part of a larger, brilliant compositional move. Space, as a narrative device, tends to connote the unknown and the unfamiliar, which is why it so often plays a role in science fiction grappling with new or unforeseen developments. These kinds of stories, even if they highlight human themes, tend to do this despite emotionally alienating premises and settings. This is the point—unexpected humanity. It makes sense to accentuate this tension by using minimalist, futurist, or experimental scoring. Though *Star Wars*, from head to toe, seems like it should be science fiction, it actually bears more resemblance to the high fantasy of Lewis and Tolkien than the classic sci fi of Asimov and Bradbury. The heartbeat of the saga is not the advanced flight technology, or planetary exploration, or otherworldly weapons, but a mysterious magical energy and a religious cult which studies it.

Continued on page 16

COOL Sydney Steans-Gail

Mary plays Childish Gambino, and Caroline plays Miley Cyrus. Leo is listening to Jens Lekman, Sophia to Kurt Vile, and Ruth to Beyoncé. KP listens to Michael Bublé and Cam to Lorde.

Not Cool, Not Cool, Cool, Cool, Cool, Cool, Not Cool.

Childish Gambino should be cool, but Mary is listening to Redbone which was the #1 hit from *Awaken, My Love*, so that’s not cool.

Miley Cyrus is uncool, but she’s so uncool that in some cases it becomes cool. Liking what everyone slightly dislikes isn’t cool, but liking what everyone hates is cool.

I’ve never heard of Jens Lekman, so that’s automatically cool.

Kurt Vile is very cool, and Sophia is cool because she’s listening to a song I don’t know. If I’d known it, it would have been automatically downgraded.

Beyoncé is always cool. Though hating Beyoncé is contrarian enough that some people could make it cool.

Michael Bublé is not cool eleven months out of the year, but exceptions are made for seasonal listens. Cool.

Lorde is played out. Not cool.

I want to listen to Jens Lekman because Leo is a very cool dude (his Instagram has a selfie that is spread across pics from months apart, so you

can only see the whole pic in his grid. Very cool.) but he’ll see in his feed that I’m listening to the song he was just listening to. Horrifyingly uncool.

Madi puts on Corinne Bailey Rae. Nostalgia is very cool.

Putting too much effort into a playlist name is not cool. Not putting enough effort into a playlist name is not cool. Leo uses the name of sea creatures—right now he’s listening to starfish. Spontaneously cool. I use a random work generator for my playlist names. Tentatively cool.

Chance used to be cool, but he’s not Chicago’s dude anymore. Maybe you could listen to some of his old stuff that the suburban kids don’t know, but that’s all on SoundCloud so it won’t do you any good. Maybe try Noname?

You could try looking at lists of up and coming artists to watch in 2018? But definitely go to Pitchfork not Rolling Stone. Rolling Stone is too commercial now. Not cool. Knowing artists before everyone else is cool, but being a dick about it isn’t. Having your music at all times is cool, but listening to the same songs all the time is not cool. So don’t forget to mix it up and have a wide range of music. That said, your followers only see the songs one by one so there can’t be any duds. Not cool.

To be safe, I just keep mine on private.

RITUAL TALK

Sara McCartney

It's October and Ritual Talk is celebrating the release of their first EP, *Rippled Glass*. When I ask them how long it took to record, Alex DeSimine, the band's main songwriter, laughs and admits "too long." With not only an EP but a recent move from Harlem to Brooklyn and live dates across the east coast, the band has had a busy year. Their aforementioned tour has brought them to New Haven; before the show, they caught up with me at the Willoughby's around the corner to recaffeinate and chat about the band's journey so far.

Ritual Talk describe themselves as a psychedelic indie band, but even a cursory listen reveals their sound to be much more complex. They are distinguished by their harmonies, in which all five band members take to the mic. This detail, drummer Tom Criblez relates, grew out of their live shows. This was tough for Tom who, along with guitarist and percussionist Dylan Gleit, didn't consider himself a singer—not to mention the challenge of drumming and singing at the same time. Considering how seamless the group's vocals sound, both on record and live, this is beyond impressive. But as Alex assures me, "it's bullshit that only singers can sing," citing Bob Dylan as an example. It's certainly hard to argue with the finished product.

The creation of *Rippled Glass* was a true exercise in DIY recording. Recording in their old apartment in Harlem, the band had to be resourceful, using a blanket as a vocal booth, and moving guitar amps to the bathroom to get the right atmosphere. The vocals, which meld so seamlessly, were mostly recorded separately and mixed later.

Their new place in Brooklyn has allowed for a larger set-up, which is still growing. Living together is an added convenience, even if it raises eyebrows. As bassist Alex Tremiere quips, they've been called a commune before. Being able to rehearse in the apartment and not having to worry about transportation—except for Dylan, who still lives in Manhattan—means that rehearsing and creating is easily integrated with the rest of their daily lives. Being close to other artists in Brooklyn's music scene was also a key factor in the move. Alex T. tells me that they were attracted to the area because there was so much going on and, thanks to proximity, people often swing by to jam in the basement. "Every time I go out, I meet someone going after their passion. Everywhere," says Tom.

The release of the new EP also brings changes with how audiences connect to Ritual Talk's music. As Alex D. explains, live music is inherently a collective experience. Songs can sound different every time, as some parts of a song are drawn out, arrangements are changed, and the band chats with the audience between songs. On the other hand, listeners experience recorded music in countless ways, from blasting it at a party to listening alone late at night. Recorded tracks also make the band more widely accessible. The EP not only allows the band to reach anyone with an internet connection, but also lets audience members keep listening after the show is done. At a recent show in Binghamton, audiences were familiar enough with the band's oeuvre to request songs, and others took out their phones to follow the band on Spotify as the music still swelled around them. Safe to say that the Ritual Talk fan base is growing thanks to both the live and recorded experiences.

Playing live music is of course still vital to the band's activity. When I spoke with them, they were in the middle of a fall tour in a car called Ben that they've become adept at loading with gear. On the road, the band takes turns queuing up songs with the rule that no one's allowed to look at what's

already been added. This means that no one knows what the vibe will be when their song comes on. This may make for an odd mix, but keyboardist TJ Alcala reflects that it's a great moment when two songs vibe. Playlist creation, according to Alex D., is "a subtle exercise in connecting brains."

Checking out the band's promotional pics, videos, cover art, and live show aesthetic – including an old tv modified to display the band's name in flashing lights – one might think a sort of musical mind meld has already occurred. I asked the band how they manage to maintain such a consistent aesthetic that's nonetheless hard to describe. According to Dylan, this is the result of solid communication between the band and a willingness to put a lot of thought to how they present themselves. Everything "from an Instagram post to a song" gets talked over and approved by all five members to make sure that it fits the vision. (I can't help thinking that cohabitation streamlines the process). Alex D. tells me that the band arrives at their aesthetic through adjectives and ideas; it's less about an end goal, the way a marketing campaign might be, and more about everyone in the band feeling comfortable in the direction.

This unnamable aesthetic is perhaps most felt in the band's two exquisite music videos for two of the tracks on the EP. In their creation, Ritual Talk benefited from their place in creative communities both near and far. The video for "Sense" was made by the artist Alex Braddock, recommended by a friend. They never met in person and the video was created through a few brief conversations on Skype. The video for "Help, I've Been Dreaming" was made by Tom's brother, Dan Criblez, a sculptor, in collaboration with Alex over the course of a year. Both videos allowed for other artists to add their interpretations and their own visions to the music.

It turns out, just such a dialogue between artists, and between band and audience, is exactly what Ritual Talk is all about. I've hesitated to ask

about the band's name, worried that it's as hackneyed a question as wondering where they get their ideas, but it comes up naturally when we're chatting about the uniqueness of a live setting. Alex D. tells me that, when the audience is into the music and paying attention, the exchange between musician and audience is a "ritual conversation." The band's cryptic name refers to the very act of performing and sharing music. As someone about to witness Ritual Talk's live performance myself, and in a venue that has become one of the cultural hearts of my time at Yale, I'm glad I'm taking notes.

As for the future, Alex D. is happy to say that the band is "just getting started" with "a full and ready pipeline of projects." With the first EP available (on Spotify if you're so inclined) and a plethora of live dates lined up, the band is excited to move on to new projects and new ideas. Ben rolls on, and the conversation continues.

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John Williams

EPISODE IV

Claire Haldeman

Star Wars is fantastic, not alien, a distinction that Williams clearly understands and accentuates with his stylistic and compositional choices. He is writing a symphony, using classical instruments and familiar sounds. He shows us that *Star Wars* is epic and magical, not incisive and technological. While the score has a searing signature, it is also intentionally, impossibly familiar.

This, for me, was the great joy of seeing each of the most recent installments of the new trilogy. Despite being under new ownership and direction, despite displaying a much more diverse and egalitarian galaxy, despite the tormented and complex villain, there was a distinct sense of continuity. The hopscotching woodwinds of “Rey’s Theme” and the frenetic symphony of “March of the Resistance” mingle with the highbrow horns of “Leia’s Theme” and the belligerently brassy “Rebel Fanfare,” and it is possible to feel at home in the story as it unfolds.

Much like the Force, much like John Williams himself, the music of *Star Wars* will present differently, but will keep coming back around in the cycle of cultural imagination.

