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AMUZINE.MAIL@GMAIL.COM



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a MuZine

Volume 1

THE MISSION

Mr. John Monroe and Mr. Scott Peeples have teamed up to create a music zine. Music, both as an art and as a medium for communication, plays on of the rhythmic nature of the human experience. In doing so it can effectively disseminate content to the listener.

Our goal in zining includes improving the interaction between music and audience. Through focusing and growing a listener's exposure to music in such a way as to keep the listener active and interested. Why is it that classically uneducated people don't like purely instrumental music? Why is it that educated people typically don't like top 40 music as much as uneducated people? We can lead people to a more complex and developed musical taste by better understanding the



biases and progressions in musical taste. We seek to differentiate artful music from profitable music, which will inevitably involve revealing profitable music as canned. We aren't trying to discourage people from enjoying mass-produced music, but rather aid them in diversifying their tastes.

Everybody loves music. Everybody loves different music, and though this can be a great source of unity or disagreement, all music consists of similar qualities: meter and pitch. Any music without these qualities is universally considered to be of poor quality. But what further influences people's tastes? The simplest answer is 'life experience.'

What makes music complete? What makes Steely Dan crisp and glossy; what makes Sonny and Cher average? Scott McCloud provides an applicable schema in Understanding Comics.

THE MUSICAL PARADIGM

Surface: If you were listening to your favorite song through a blown out tweeter from the tape deck of your Chevy Nova it probably won't sound like you remembered. By contrast, if you were listening to Smashmouth on the latest most clear-and-in-your-face-high-quality headphones it would still suck. Distortion is a powerful tool. It yields unpredictable results - pump music you like through it and you might not enjoy it anymore - pump music you hate through it and it may have magically turned badass. The conduit does not necessarily have to affect the sound waves at all; to the extent that it does this "surface" can profoundly change your processing of the music. So the question becomes: how much do I have to funk up music I hate before I like it? Funk up the music or funk up the way you process it - either way you may find things to appreciate.



Craft: This is the second filter for whether or not most people like music they hear. Performance - if their voice or their playing is weak people label it "bad music" Production - the ability to manipulate and modify the previously developed product for some purpose. Almost all radio-played music has been heavily produced to conform to certain conventions of compression and pitch range. Most pop music is digitally altered.

Structure: A simple verse-chorus progression can affect one's expectations of and ability to memorize a song. The ability to sing along can equal enjoyment.

Idiom: or genre, is the most basic level of musical preference and classification. Revolutionary music often creates its own genre. Certain genres, such as hip-hop and country, are based more upon music and less upon lifestyle.

For example, country music is a genre. It is a categorical labeling of certain traits. The county genre typically features acoustic stringed instruments and southern accented vocalists(craft); major key tonality, walking basslines, simple conversational lyrics (structure), relationship based narratives (idea/purpose). Not all country music has all of these

traits, but it must have some to be considered country.

When someone says they don't like country music they likely mean they don't like certain characteristics common to the country music genre (perhaps the simple conversational lyrics). Because music needn't perfectly fit a certain mold it should be possible to focus on specific traits that an individual enjoys and form connections to other songs with similar traits. Websites such as Pandora.com and Last.fm have done this exhaustively. They try to trace an outline of what traits a person likes in music and connect them to music with similar traits. Exercises like this should help people broaden not only the breadth of their musical taste, but the depth as well.

Depth in this case refers the diversity of the types of musical traits a person can appreciate.

Purpose: Is the artist conveying something? What is his/her purpose in creating this music? This is not always easy to discern. Sometimes the artist simply wants to create an intellectual and emotional vehicle for you to ride in. Just grab a seat and see where it takes you.

This leads to the flip side of purpose. What is my purpose in listening to this music? Am I sad and looking for catharsis? Am I happy and looking for something to bolster it? Am I contemplative and looking for the meaning of life? Am I pissed and wanting to rage? Always check your motive and purpose when approaching music. It's okay to not enjoy music sometimes - just don't instantly blame it on the artist - maybe part of the blame is yours - maybe all the blame is yours. Forgive us Smashmouth and Nickelback - do your thing.



CONTRIBUTIONS

Several of our peers have submitted reviews based upon their musical preferences, and nearly all of them focused primarily on performance or lyrical content, so we surmise that these are the most important categories for preferential classification.

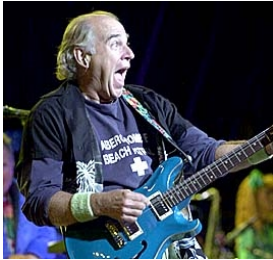
Although our beginnings are so-far highly opinionated, we are ultimately attempting to deliver people from the computer-altered, icon-driven, pop-electronica of the Madonnas and Britney Spearses of the world, into a world where music is quantitative and qualitative, like all other art. Thankfully, nobody submitted a pop review. Our contemporaries:

- John Siewert on why Nickleback sucks
- Robert Woods on Jimmy Buffet
- Austin Tipps on Lupe Fiasco
- Emery Skofield on Talib Kweli
- Farrah Burke on Rock and Roll
- Danielle Broussard on Queen
- Stephen Fleaman on video game music

LET'S START WITH SOMETHING THAT SUCKS

I don't listen to a lot of radio or watch music videos, so I'm really limited in my overall awareness of new music. But I can say I really dislike Nickelback. For the few minutes I spend listening to the radio each day, it seems they are always on, and it really sucks! To me they are just another over-rated cookie-cutter rock band that has somehow absorbed a large fan base, large enough to warrant constant radio air-time. I couldn't tell you their worst song because I can barely tell them apart. I also can't tell you if their new CD is tolerable or even if it is extremely horrible. I think the root of my dislike stems from the sheer genericness of their music. What makes my dislike fester is that they seem to be really popular despite this. And I see no light at the end of the tunnel, because I'm sure they will continue to regurgitate more and more awful music for quite some time. Seriously, is this the future of rock? DOWN WITH NICKLEBACK!

LIVING THE LIFE



Jimmy Buffett and the Coral Reefer Band are definitely worth checking out. When people think of Jimmy Buffett, they usually think of "Margaritaville," "Get Drunk and Screw," "5 O' Clock Somewhere," and a

couple other tired songs. Don't get me wrong, these songs will have a bar singing in no time. However, there are many more Buffett songs worth sampling. For example, there is "Jamaica Mistaica," on the Banana Wind album, which is Jimmy Buffett and his posse (I believe Bono from U2 was with him, as well) being shot down as they flew over Jamaica - the police had mistaken them for drug smugglers. Other good songs include "Floridays," "Boat Drinks," "Volcano," and "We Are the People Our Parents Warned Us About."

Jimmy Buffett and the Coral Reefers also put

on a great concert. I have been to four Jimmy Buffett concerts (2 in Tallahassee, 1 in West Palm Beach, and 1 in Tampa). The tailgating event is always crazy...it's not everyday that you see a school bus converted into a 40' motorized land shark. Buffett and his band put on a lively show, though he tends to play the same thing every time I have seen him. I recommend Jimmy Buffett to anyone who enjoys lively beats and creative, sometimes explicit lyrics. Many of Jimmy Buffett's songs often make direct and/or indirect references to binge drinking, one night stands, drug use, island getaways, and the like, which gives the music an "edgy" touch (for lack of a better description).



COUNTRY IS A LITTLE BIT ROCK 'N' ROLL

The difference between Country music and Rock 'n' Roll isn't in craft or structure: both are essentially Pop (4/4 time, emphasis on up-beat, 1-4-5 progression), but one is usually sung with a funny accent. Country music is defined by the southern, working-class lifestyle it supports.

I don't find it to be unpalatable, but decidedly lacking in novel content. Every once in a while I'll hear a Country song that is hilarious. I listened to Toby Keith's "High Maintenance Woman" at the prompt of Ted Haynie, another of my contemporaries, and I started to laugh

convulsively after the first few bars, because its themes are exemplar of Country music:

I see you laying by the poolside every day,
She ain't got a lot on, she ain't got to say.
She wouldn't look my way, but buddy what'd you expect?
I'm just the fix-it-up boy at the apartment complex.

Every good country song has three elements: a dumb, good-looking woman, a line containing "I'm just a (working-class noun)," and a lack of uniform person.
- John



...nice git-ar...



KEEPING IT REAL

Musicians need talent to be good and that is what Lupe Fiasco has. He reminds me of a young Jay-Z, but with better lyrics and flow. He is a phenomenal lone rapper. His CD is entitled *Lupe Fiasco's Food & Liquor*. I recommend "Kick, Push," "Real," "Just Might be OK," "I Gotcha," – these are some of my favorite songs. "I Gotcha" is a pretty good one. Overall, I give the album an 8.5 out of 10. It has some awesome beats and lyrics. I HIGHLY recommend picking up this CD if you're looking for a new, fresh artists who brings back the "good" rap.

I am not a "new age" rap fan and can't stand all the songs that are played on the radios that make no sense: no meaning and ridiculous lyrics. Lupe's lyrics make sense and have a nice mesh with the beats chosen. Even if you don't like rap you might like Lupe, because he mixes a lot of diverse music to come up with something all in its own.

HIP-HOP HERO

Talib Kweli is a hip-hop artist, a title often confused with "rapper," though the two terms are not synonymous (ask KRS-1). To many, Talib Kweli may cut the mold of gangsta rapper, at least on a superficial level. After all, he has, on occasion, worn baggy pants and a N.Y. Yankees caps tilted to one side or the other, or backward. He probably owns a diamond watch and likely a necklace to match. He may or many not own a Mercedes. He is black.

But enough about labels and stereotypes. Regardless of which category you shove him into or label you affix to him, Talib Kweli is simply a lyricist (but not a simple lyricist), a poet on the mic, laying narrative over bass-heavy drumbeats. It's a sound cultivated in the nondescript clubs - lyricist lounges - of Brooklyn and Queens and refined in "underground" studios. Kweli came up through hip-hop's subterranean and has risen to modest commercial success - along with contemporaries

like The Roots, Common and Mos Def - on word of mouth (as in, the words from his mouth); his mastery too formidable to ignore entirely.

"If skills sold, truth be told, I'd probably be, lyrically, Talib Kweli," said rap mogul Jay-Z, a fellow New York hip-hopper who came up alongside radio-heavy acts such as the Notorious B.I.G. and Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs, but has, over the years, garnered the respect of underground hip-hop heads. Jay-Z has sold tens of millions of records and just as many hoodies (sweatshirts) under his Roca Wear clothing line (which he recently sold for \$204-million). Jay-Z is filthy rich, and the fact he makes mention of Kweli in a song is significant. A sign of respect, to be sure.

Kweli responded to Jay-Z's shout-out on his 2004 album, *The Beautiful Struggle* with a remixed verse: "If lyrics sold, then truth be told/I'd probably be just as rich and famous as Jay-Z." Kweli is neither as rich nor as famous, nor is he dating Beyonce, or any of Destiny's other children.

GENERATION

I was trying to think of my favorite band and I decided that there is no way I could pick just one because it would only represent one genre of music I listen to. I listen to predominately ska punk music depending who is defining the word "punk". Operation Ivy (Ska Punk, Third Wave Ska, Hardcore Punk) is the band that I have been listening recently.

The title of the album is Operation Ivy: Energy. The band was around from 1987 until 1989 and originated in Berkley California. Two of the members, Tim Armstrong and Matt Freeman, later formed a more popular band called Rancid (Punk Rock, Ska Punk). Tim was on guitar and vocals until he formed Transplants (Hip-hop, Punk Rock) which is one of my favorite bands and is how I found out about Operation Ivy.



Trivium (Metalcore, Progressive metal, Thrash metal) is a thrash metal core band from Orlando. I saw them perform at The

Masquerade in Ybor. They opened for Killswitch Engage. The drummer is phenomenal: he played a 13 piece drum set and utilized every piece. There are many other band I love:

Alternative/Rock

Pearl Jam, Tool, Rush, The Killers, Panic at the Disco, Tom Petty

Metal

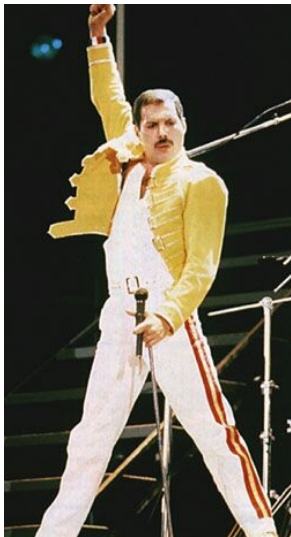
Tool, Killswitch Engage, Between the Baried and Me

Punk

The Pogues, Less Than Jakes, NOFX, Transplants

Ska/Reggae

Sublime, Bob Marley, Distorted Penguins



QUEEN

Brian May, Freddie Mercury, Roger Taylor, and John Deacon formed the London based sensation, Queen. Their phenomenal lyrical styling, accompanied with the intricate scores made this group an instant success.

Queen has become Britain's most successful band since the Beatles. The boys had little success with their first two albums, Queen I and Queen II, and it wasn't until they released their "Sheer Heart Attack" that Queen became world famous.

On 20 April 1992, the public shared in the mourning of Mercury's passing at The Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert,

held at London's Wembley Stadium in Mercury's honor. Musicians including Tony Iommi, Robert Plant, Annie Lennox, Guns N' Roses, Extreme, Roger Daltrey, Def Leppard, Elton John, George Michael, David Bowie, Metallica and Liza Minnelli, along with the three remaining members of Queen, performed many of Queen's major hits. It was a successful concert that was televised to over 1 billion viewers worldwide. The concert is in The Guinness Book of Records as "The largest rock star benefit concert." It raised over £20,000,000 for AIDS charity.

John Deacon soon retired thereafter. May and Taylor continue to act as a duo, and are currently working on an album with Paul Rogers.

There was a lot of controversy surrounding Freddie, whether he had AIDS or not, the drugs, and all of the other drama that comes with being rich and famous. However, none of that has to do with their musical talent; they are one of the greatest bands ever.

DIGITAL SIMPLICITY

Remember the days of the Nintendo Entertainment System? These were the golden days of video game music. There was once a time when the sound card and the music card were not two separate entities. The music on the NES consists of arranged, repeating sound effects and in patterns to create what we call music. This process is obsolete in today's gaming world with the advent of high-fidelity game systems which have the ability to use any music. Thought the technology is obsolete, the music that was made is some of the best, from the classics like Mega Man and Kirby to the much lesser known titles such as Journey to Silius. The programmers put their soul into each piece of music and it portrays an emotion that ties the game together. You can tell after listening to these tracks that so much effort was put into the arranging and editing. An effort that is less often done by music professionals in modern games. By

making the technology easier, the flood gates had been opened to mediocre and dismal music. These three games in particular come from the post 16-bit era. This means that they were competing with systems that had better sound and graphics. In order to keep up, they had to **be** better, and these games did the best job they possibly could in both areas.



Beautiful, isn't she?

ELECTRONIC MELODY

I grew up listening to Erasure's album "The Innocents" - my older brother had the CD. Songs like "A Little Respect" were so catchy you couldn't help but sing along. I'm pretty sure it's impossible to listen to Erasure and not be happy - very major key with the ever popular techno beat pulsing throughout.

Erasure's music features a lot of the electronica of techno, but they also rely heavily on strong melodic instrumental vamps. It's a UK band fronted by keyboardist Vince Clarke and singer Andy Bell. Their songwriting made Erasure commercially successful - very poppy.

It may be like those cult classic movies you watched when you were little. Try to show them to someone who didn't grow up on them and they won't

like them. You'll just have to give Erasure a chance. It's definitely an occasional treat kind of music, but everything has its place. - Scott



DIGITAL > ANALOG

A HOW-TO SPECIAL

1. Install Audacity. It is just as good as commercial products such as Screenblast Soundforge, and it's free.

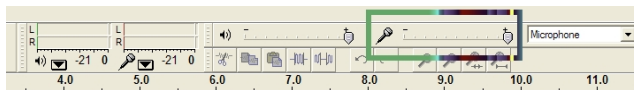
<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

2. Connect, and adapt as necessary, the analog player device to the microphone or line-in jack of a computer.



3. Test your computer's input levels by making a recording of about 30 seconds. Click the Red Circle on Audacity to begin recording.

4. Adjust the audio volume near the microphone icon in Audacity. You can also select a different input to the right of this. The default is all-the-way-up.



5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 as necessary. The appropriateness of your volume level should be judged by the quality of the sample at the peak of its waveform.

6. Record the entire LP, tape, 8 track, reel, etc.

7. Observe the waveform in Audacity to determine where a track begins and ends. Cut, paste into a new project and save each track individually.

This method does not violate copyright laws. Consumers have the right to reproduce, but not distribute, any material. However, copied material must be transferred or destroyed if the original recording changes ownership.