

cut

Issue
42



October 2016

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Letter From The Editor

Hey guys,

Welcome to another great year of music in Pittsburgh, brought to you by (hopefully) your favorite on-campus magazine. The disgusting summer heat is finally gone, but with it went the late sunsets, so I'm writing to you in almost complete darkness, even though it's barely 7 o'clock. But enough griping—autumn's arrival also signals the return of fuzzy socks in my day-to-day wardrobe, so I'm happy for the most part.

And it's not just the weather that's changing! Exciting things are afoot within the ranks of our publication's staff as well. This issue, the first of the semester, features the editorial and creative

debuts of a host of new Cut contributors: Liam van Oort gives us a taste of what Mac Miller's hometown concert was like, Anna Gross gets spiritual with Sir the Baptist, Joe Sweeney guides us on the wild ride of a journey that has been Frank Ocean's career, and many others share their musical thoughts.

Pieces from our veteran writers include an exploration and appropriation of Jason Derulo's misogynistic lyrics and an introduction to one of Pittsburgh's premiere concert venues.

Last but not least, in lieu of a formal Music News segment within the pages

of the magazine, I'd like to share two tidbits I thought were heartening and worth mentioning here: Young Thug has announced that he will wear a dress at his own wedding (yay for crushing gender-stereotypes!) and Kid Cudi has gone public with his decision to seek treatment for depression (yay for confronting social stigmas around mental illness!).

And on that positive note, I just want to say: I'm excited to share this issue with you as the first one that I've presided over as Editor-in-Chief, and I hope you stick around for our sophomore effort in November.

Imogen Todd



Chainsmokers at Thrival
Photo by Mark Egge

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What We're Listening To



Izzy McCarthy

Reclaiming Objectification in the Age of Jason Derulo

My issues with Jason Derulo go way back to his debut single, “Watcha Say.” Yes it was catchy. Yes, it sampled Imogen Heap’s iconic “Hide and Seek.” Yes, I still sing along with the chorus every time it comes on. But “Watcha Say” was the preview to Jason’s career as master of objectification. When I first heard that song back in 2009 and Jason used auto-tune to ask his girl for a second chance, I was ready to give him just that. He clearly sings, “I know I should’ve treated you better.” So, I overlooked his infidelity; disrespecting women was in his past. But since then, Jason has served as the quintessential example of pop melodies covering up degrading lyrics.

When Jason’s “Talk Dirty” came on the radio for the first time, I didn’t

immediately register that the only time a woman can speak and Jason will care is “when she talks dirty to him.” (His words, not mine). I know, why did I ever allow that song to be played in *my car*, a sacred vessel of zero-tolerance feminism? I didn’t process the degrading punch line because of a hypnotizing instrumental chorus that immediately followed. The same formula created “Wiggle,” “Trumpets,” and numerous other Derulo hits. Pop music uses the tactic all the time, sending demeaning lyrics into the Top 50 with catchy melodies.

And although Derulo’s “Get Ugly” gained some 2016 popularity, I believe it’s still possible to reclaim objectification from Jason. See, when the Top 50 overlaps with hip-hop, objectification becomes more blatant and

less socially acceptable for girls to claim as “their song.” Take D.R.A.M. and Lil Yachty’s “Broccoli,” for example. “Said that I can get that p*ssy easily” is not a subtle lyric. By gender binary norms, girls aren’t expected to rap about being a “dirty dog” and “hitting sh*t greasily,” but that’s exactly what we should be doing. You heard me correctly: the more blatant the sexism, the more inclined you should be to sing along. Instead of dancing when Jason Derulo asks you to, take over the role of objectifier yourself.

Mark Egge

Pittsburgh Venues: Mr. Smalls

This is the first of three columns profiling Pittsburgh music venues, with hopes of better connecting CMU students to our awesome local music scene.

Mr. Smalls started out as a 19th century Catholic church, but closed due to a shrinking congregation. In 2000 it reopened as an 800-capacity concert hall, where acts like Smashing Pumpkins, Metric, Muse, and Old Crowe Medicine Show have since played. Rising acts like alt-J and Foster the People first broke into the music scene here, too, before going on to play sold out shows at 10,000-plus-capacity venues.

Co-founded by Rusted Root band member Liz Berlin, Mr. Smalls continues as a family-owned and -operated business. Originally conceived of as a community recording studio, Mr. Smalls also provides aspiring young Pittsburgh musicians with exposure, access, and opportunity through its charitable arm, Creative Life.Support.

Inside the venue, the spacious stage still lets fans get an up-close-and-personal experience with the musicians. Generally cheap tickets (\$20 to \$30 for most shows), good acoustics, and quality sound and lighting equipment make it a great place to catch a show.

Most headliners take the stage by 9:00 or 9:30 pm. For the 21+ crowd, consider heading to Millvale early for

drinks at The Funhouse (the 21+ small-stage theater upstairs from the main auditorium) or either of Millvale's two excellent breweries. For those under 21, your best bet may be Lawrenceville, a 10-minute walk away across the 40th Street Bridge.

In addition to concerts, Mr. Smalls holds several weekly events at The Funhouse, the upstairs theater and bar. It features an acoustic open mic night on Mondays, electronic music on Thursdays, and local and regional acts on Fridays and Saturdays. For a complete listing of events, find "The Funhouse at Mr. Smalls" on Facebook.

Unfortunately, getting to Mr. Smalls can be a bit tough for students without a car. Although Millvale is

served by Port Authority bus routes 1 and 2 (which depart from downtown), most will find Uber a more convenient way to access the venue.

Unless otherwise stated, shows at Mr. Smalls are all-ages events. Get tickets online at www.mrsmalls.com or visit the theater box office, open from noon until 5:00 pm, Tuesday through Friday.

Why And How We Respond To Tragic Music

Article by Justin Kelly
with Art by Kate Werth



Ever since the ancient Greeks recorded their timeless tragedies, humankind has been responding to the most horrifying moments in its history with art. We composed symphonies to themes of fate and suicide; we painted the blood-stained battlefields of the American Civil War; we wrote poetry of genocide in Rwanda.

These events log themselves in a deep place within ourselves, reserved for only the highest and lowest moments. Art, and particularly music, provide a way of preserving and communicating such things in a more complete way than words can do alone.

But why do we do it? Why do we listen to music that revives emotions so steeped in pain and suffering? Practically, this music obviously has value. People forget; time dulls the memory's recollection of the moments immediately following disaster. The lessons learned lose their significance. When we commemorate those events, we eternalize them. It helps us remember what matters.

Okay, sure. This music makes us care. Hopefully it actually motivates action and social change, too. But that doesn't explain why we actually *want* to listen to songs that bring us down. When I began to write about tragic music, I was struck by this conundrum. On some level, we have always enjoyed consuming art that has the power to fill us with grief, sorrow, heartbreak. And somewhat paradoxically, we find it rewarding.

There's a lot that underpins such a complex behavior. Firstly, it strikes me that a large part of a given song's entertainment value comes from how well the artist makes a personal connection with the listener. When a singer is grieving the loss of someone or something and can immerse us in that feeling, we are able to commiserate. This is a hugely important aspect of the process of grief—I know I have used many different songs to cope with despair in my own life. However, I find that I still listen to immensely sorrowful songs long after I have moved on from the immediate shock of calamity. It feels strange to

say, but – I deeply enjoy that music, even though I often can't make it to the end of some of my favorite songs with dry eyes.

The standard human response to suffering is to minimize it. But I've found that this not the case with music and art. In almost all other aspects of life, we value a thing or an experience by the type of response that it elicits. A vacation is deemed good if it made you feel relaxed, it's bad if it didn't. But with music, instead of this categorical evaluation, I think we appreciate value according to the

magnitude of the response. Music is good not based on exactly what it makes you feel, but rather how deeply it makes you feel. And tragic moments in history provide an access point for some of the most profoundly felt emotions that one experiences in a lifetime. Perhaps Robert Spano, conductor of the Atlanta Symphony, puts it best. In reference to one of the great tragic works of the 20th century, Mahler's Symphony No. 6, he says, "There's no redemption, in a sense, but there is catharsis... I don't think we end defeated, but I think we are transformed by the drama that unfolds. We are elevated by it."

Here are three songs that commemorate horrific events in vivid, captivating ways.

Sharon
van Etten
Not Myself

Pulse Nightclub Shooting,
Orlando FL – June 12, 2016

Nightclub shooting, van Etten's chilling vocals combine with a simple, motionless piano harmony to capture so well the static, permanent energy that lingers in the immediate aftermath of tragedy.

Tedeschi
Trucks Band
It's So Heavy

The musical power-duo of Susan Tedeschi's crooning voice and Derek Trucks' emotive slide guitar never fail to move you, but they normally make you feel good. Recorded in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, their rare expression of agony cuts with singular force. It's personal, too – just an hour before laying down the final vocal track, Tedeschi learned that her grandfather had passed away.

Saul Williams
The Noise
Came from Here

Saul Williams' anger and frustration towards police brutality is palpable on this track from his latest social justice concept album, *MartyrLoserKing*. In the music video, which also features spoken word poetry from Marcellus Buckley, Williams drives home the lyric "We won't be silenced /No we won't restrain" as he walks the streets of Ferguson, Missouri.



Lawrence Han

Much of pop music focuses on personal tensions and prescribe getting lit as the medicine. The Chainsmokers at Thrival acted out this duality in their set, which circled around heartbreak as it enabled release.



Andrew Taggart gushed a lot about how much he loved Pittsburgh and did a lot of table aerobics. He tried to get the crowd to chant along for every other song and kept hype levels high. But the music itself was sometimes somber and the crowd embraced that—“Single Ladies” and “Love Lockdown” got loud chants and sing-alongs from the crowd, fit in between Chainsmokers material and bass tunes. The show was pretty lit up though there were probably over a hundred glow sticks thrown at the stage by the end of the night. Chainsmokers did not close with “Closer” but kept playing until, presumably, the last heartbroken straggler left, relieved at least into the morning.

Ryan Aguirre

Carrie Furnaces provided a unique backdrop to Thrival’s assortment of acts this year. When I arrived Sunday afternoon, I got the disappointing impression the artists were playing background music to a large family picnic. But as day turned to night, the focus turned toward the music. Even after attending Day 1, Day 2 acts Rubblebucket and Metric made the best impression on me. Rubblebucket clearly had the most fun on and off stage, featuring simple yet funky synchronized dance moves and frequent journeys into the crowd. Metric, on the other hand, rocked the hardest. Singer Emily Haines went all-out, her voice reaching over the band’s tinnitus-inducing (in a good way) guitar riffs as they performed the hell out of their greatest hits. Energetic bands like Rubblebucket and Metric are what make the festival experience memorable.

This is *Thrival*

Photos by Mark Egge



Mac Miller Liam Van Oort

“A stark contrast from when I saw him previously, this new, energetic, and refreshed Mac Miller is everything I could have wanted.”

On September 18th, rapper and Pittsburgh-native Mac Miller delivered an energetic performance at Stage AE. Last year, I saw Miller in Austin, TX during the *GO:OD AM* tour, and it was a completely different experience. There, he gave a messy performance, arriving on stage drunk two hours late, barely able to spit out his verses: He gave a lackluster performance that left something to be desired. But this time, Miller was on fire. He translated his excitement into the crowd, calling Pittsburgh, “the best city in the entire world” and whipping out unusual dad-like dance moves on stage. Maybe it was the fact that he was playing in his home town, or that his new boo Ariana Grande was there with him; maybe it was the Steelers victory or being six months sober. Whatever the reasons, he gave an excellent performance, and made sure the show focused only on him. He enlisted lesser known opening artists and restrained from bringing out Ariana Grande, who stood off to the side of the stage (but attracted attention nonetheless). While he played a few songs from his new album, *The Divine Feminine*, he focused mostly on his “greatest hits” and songs from *GO:OD AM*. Highlights included “Loud,” “100 Grandkids,” “Knock Knock,” “Best Day Ever,” “Nikes on My Feet,” and “Weekend.” When he played “Donald Trump,” he stopped and told the audience to “f*ck Trump” and vote for anyone other than the talking carnival peanut. Overall, Miller gave an eccentric performance that highlighted both his music and the city of Pittsburgh. A stark contrast from when I saw him previously, this new, energetic, and refreshed Mac Miller is everything I could have wanted.

The Mountain Goats Claire Lai

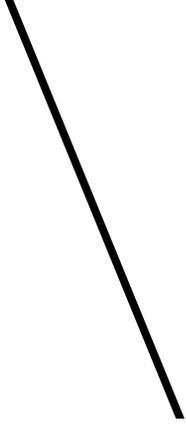
“They bring out the desperate joy that everyone feels at their worst and their best.”

The Mountain Goats have a reputation: They’re prolific, they’re raw, they’re sometimes just John Darnielle. They’re all traits that I personally enjoy, and since I missed their show in Pittsburgh in 2014 (in Carnegie Mellon’s own Rangos Ballroom), I’ve been keeping an eye out for tour dates. And lo and behold, in August I saw their announcement: The Mountain Goats, playing Mr. Smalls on September 3rd, 2016.

It was part of a small tour called *The Summer Knows*, just John Darnielle and Matt Douglas, a new addition to the band. At the Mr. Smalls show, the pop singer-songwriter Tristen opened, warming up the crowd with an energetic performance.

Then the Mountain Goats came on. They played a strong main set, starting with “Idylls of the King.” Together, JD and Matt mostly drew from newer albums *Transcendental Youth* and *Beat the Champ*. Highlights included Matt Douglas playing baritone sax on “Foreign Object” and their soft handling of “Ezekiel 7 and The Permanent Efficacy of Grace.” When JD had his solo segment, he pulled out old favorites like “Cotton” and “There Will Be No Divorce.”

Throughout the show, the energy in the room was powerful. For a small venue and a relatively low-key group, I was almost surprised that people



Young The Giant

Isabelle Sio

“Lead singer Sameer Gadhia oozed a surprising but welcome charisma during his performance, which infused each movement and note with meaning.”

Concert Reviews

were so responsive and enthusiastic. (There were a few audience members who were *too* enthusiastic about “Italian Guns” but were convinced to stop eventually.) Even with the more obscure selections, there was always a good portion of people singing along. The Mountain Goats tend to attract the most devoted of fans, and when they played “This Year,” it was obvious why. They bring out the desperate joy that everyone feels at their worst and their best.

The show finished with not one, but two encores. The final, *final* song was “The Best Ever Death Metal Band in Denton,” reminding me that if I ever learned anything from listening to the Mountain Goats, it’s to keep dreaming my dreams, and to hail Satan.

Young The Giant, a band based in Irvine, California, performed at a packed Stage AE on Thursday, September 8th. From the first note of their song “Jungle Youth,” I was hooked and electrified. My prior experience with this band consisted of two songs: “Something To Believe In,” and “Cough Syrup,” but by the end of their performance, all I wanted to do was escape further into the Home of the Strange.

The two aforementioned songs were huge hits for the passionate audience. Their performance of “Something To Believe In” was relaxed and casual, upbeat and soulful. The song infused a fervid vibe in the atmosphere. “Cough Syrup” felt like an instant classic and even boosted the performers’ and the crowd’s energy. Other memorable songs from this performance included the set-closer, “Home of the Strange,” a song that wrapped up all of the room’s energy and infused it twofold into the audience, and encore-closer, “My Body,” which left both me and the band smiling and basking in a youthful, lively glow.

This concert was part of Young The Giant’s Home of the Strange Tour, which promotes their latest album of the same name. The tour embraces Young The Giant’s alternative vibe in every aspect, and the music features threads of rock ‘n’ roll. Lead singer Sameer Gadhia oozed a surprising but welcome charisma during his performance, which infused each movement and note with meaning. His stage presence is like a sparkler: mundane at first, but altogether excitable and irresistible.

Ra Ra Riot, an indie rock band, also opened for Young The Giant, stirring the pot and adding their own alternative flair to the night’s atmosphere. I loved their unique and talented string section, led by Rebecca Zeller, which created a classed yet edgy sound. Their energy carried into the rest of the night, allowing the concertgoers to truly embrace feelings of strangeness and hominess.



Young the Giant at Mr. Smalls
Photo by Isabelle Sio

Songs To Make Bad Decisions To

Promiscuous by Nelly Furtado, Timbaland

Because what could push to make a bad decision like an early 2000 pop-club ballad with a strong drum line.

Anna Gross

Ignition (Remix) by R. Kelly

It's the freakin weekend, baby. Go have some fun
Anna Gross (honestly shocked these classics haven't been put on the list already)

(I Don't Think That We Should) Take It Slow by LSD and the Search for God

Anthem music for coming down and for late night connections.

Mark Egge

Stupid Decisions by Fidlär

This is a whiny, angsty song about the feeling of regret after a night of poor decision making with a chorus so catchy you'll eventually have to jump in and sing along.

Lydia Green

You Oughta Know by Alanis Morissette

The ultimate "fight me" feminist anthem from the 90s. Unleash your fury to this song, complete with Morissette's eccentric vowel articulation.

Jackie Chou

Drunk Text Romance by Cyberbully Mom Club

A reminder of that text that seemed like a really good idea at the time.

Paige O'Riordan

Collard Greens by ScHoolboy Q ft. Kendrick Lamar

Doesn't this song just really make you wanna fight someone?

Serina Liu

Hot in Herre by Nelly

There is nothing subtle about the decisions this song is asking you to make

Anna Gross

Fucc The Devil by AJJ

Please don't do this.

Brooke Ley

Better than Revenge by Taylor Swift

In this song Taylor Swift is quite literally being awahny, spoiled brat. Unleash it. And then regret it 4 years later.

Izzy Sio

Before We Go Out Drinking by Pkew Pkew Pkew

In what is essentially an ode to pre-gaming, Pkew Pkew Pkew half sings, half shouts about their decision to get drunk before going out to drink some more.

Party on, everybody.

Brad Puskar

Rehab by Amy Winehouse

This is arguably the most iconic song about making bad decisions, so would this really be a complete playlist without it?

Izzy McCarthy

Droogs by NxWorries

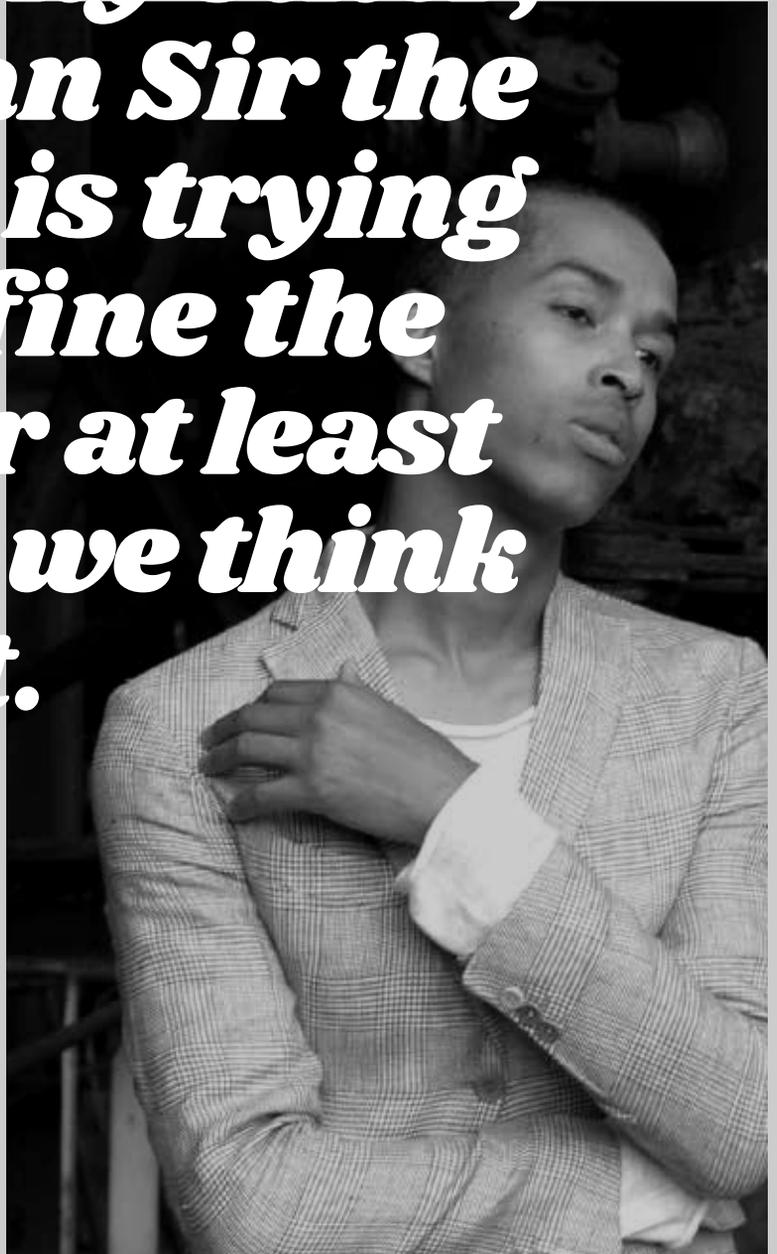
Shoutout to my boi in Stever 1 getting lost in the sauce. This song is literally about you. :(

Lawrence Han

A playlist dedicated to the songs that inspire us to do things we'll probably regret tomorrow or remind us of those past bad choices we can't undo.

With a sound and thought process unlike any other, musician Sir the Baptist is trying to redefine the game, or at least the way we think about it.

An Interview with Sir the Baptist
by Anna J. Gross with photos by Serina Liu



Sir the Baptist's (born William James Stokes) unique hip hop gospel vibe stems from an upbringing in South Side, Chicago and a life spent as the son of a preacher. Exhibiting both the spirited confidence of an entertainer and a sincere yearning to connect on an individual level, Stokes is not your run of the mill rapper/writer/singer/director. It is clear that he is motivated by something deeper than mainstream industry success. With a bold, unwavering hopefulness and some radical ideas, Stokes is ready to bring his truth to the world.



So you grew up in a religious family as the son of a preacher, but does your faith still play a major role in your life today?

Absolutely. I'm not religious, I'm more spiritual. But my job, my purpose is to change the way religion is applied. Like when you're drinking, or smoking, or having a baby... Like, how spirituality is a part of that. So I have to sort of break the barriers and fight down all the politics of religion. So I'm still spiritual, but just not politically.

How do you balance being a musician, a social activist, and an entertainer?

You talk about the important things. When you talk about the important things, all of a sudden, the lyrics write themselves, you know. So

if it matters to you, that's what you've got to write about. You can't write about something just because it's the cool thing to write about, You gotta write about it because it's necessary. The reality is, as long as you keep the forefront social justice, or whatever you think your calling is, it usually works out. It's not that I choose to be social [activist], it's what I'm passionate about, so I have to talk about it, instead of chains, cars, twerking booties, all of that sort of shit, that shit's not even it.

So you don't feel the pressure to entertain when you're performing?

I mean you gotta entertain. But I make sure even in my entertainment that it's something genuine and trying to reach you. Today

I'll probably spend most of my time in the crowd. So don't look at me up there, cause that's not where magic happens, magic happens when we come together.

You use a lot of Gospel in your music, but there's a lot of mainstream artists incorporating Gospel influences into their sound—

Tell me who.

Chance the rapper, J. Cole, Kanye! Do you think that there's an appropriation of this gospel music, using it for the sound rather than the meaning behind it—

Have you been reading my interviews?

I've watched a couple!
Haha, I can tell! I can

tell you've been listening because you're asking the right questions. I have nothing wrong with the way Chance did it, he did it and I feel like he did it in a clean slate. I think the way Kanye did it, Here's the thing... when it comes down to using chord changes, arrangements, and all of that sort of stuff, it supasses reasoning. Once you unplug [your ears] and allow music to surpass your reasoning, these gospel chords will give you chill bumps. The choir will give you chill bumps, because you're hearing, 50, 60, people if they're doing it right, and it's hitting you right in your heart. So they use that, to manipulate how you feel. And it's about time somebody change that. And not manipulate the music to manipulate you.

Some people have been manipulating these chords to get things by, but it hasn't been healthy for you.

It's playing on people's gut instincts to essentially make money.

Right, right, so once they get these chords to give you chill bumps, You don't know why, but you feel that. You hear the choir and you're wondering like "oh my god! What is this feeling!" It's the feeling they stole from something else, but they're not feeding your soul. They're actually stripping it.

And that comes through in the lyrics.

Yes, because he's calling his wife a bitch. And you go like, "wait, choir? Bitch? Timeout. How does this help ME."

Right, talking about bleached assholes over choir music. It's not exactly following the values that gospel music is known for. Most musicians' sounds will change from album to album, but yours changes pretty radically from song to song, is there a reason for this?

When you're writing, you don't write in the same way for every article. You focus on different things and you dig deeply into the subject. I pick my high heads, snares, bass drums, bass, chord changes, I pick that based on what I need for the listener to focus on. I think it's just necessary, like as a producer, if you're making the same beats, (Mumbles generic hip hop throat sounds to the beat of what could be "Panda" or any other current chart topping rap song) It's

like "what the fuck am I listening to?!" it's gotta change, Like the greats before this time, they were doing that.

You're not the same person you are on saturday night. You are, but you're not. When you wake up in the morning do you want champagne or jameson and ginger ale, no. You want orange juice or fuckin pancakes. You're a holistic person, you're not fragmented.

It's about complexity.

YEAH, you're complex, and you're beautiful because you're complex. Because you like these many different things. So artists should reflect that when they're writing to you, and there's the problem, they don't write to you. They're just writing to flex on you. Then when you're ready to go through something, and



you need a song to guide you through that, there's no song. You have an abortion, or you have to use Plan B, and you feel like this piece in you, you need something to get you over that moment...

And a lot of modern music won't do that for you.

AT ALL. So my goal is to be a part of that, because more than anything it's to score your life. Your life is much more important than that club moment, and music has to speak to that. You have so many days and so many hours before and after [the club]. You're not just that person, you're not that simple. You know what hip hop looks like to your parents? Yeah, that's not hip hop. Hip hop is sick right now. It needs to be healed. It needs someone that understands and will give it some sort of

diagnosis. You know when you're sick and you start moving slow? That's the music right now. You can hear the difference between our hip hop now and Beethoven. It's not healthy. We need to put that [energy] back into it. [These musicians] want to be great artists, and I appreciate that, but I have no desire to be the greatest artist. I have no interest in conforming at all. I've already won. This is a hobby, this ain't my purpose. The purpose is in how the lyrics break down. I want [my music] to help you through those moments when you really need it, something you can apply to your life, whether you're 17 or 70.



Sir the Baptist at Thrival
Photo by Selina Liu

Isabelle Sio

MCR Re-Release

The date is October 23, 2006. My Chemical Romance—New Jersey rock band, driving force for the “emo” subculture, and main component in the lives of many angsty teenagers—has released their third studio album *The Black Parade*, a concept album about one man’s transition to death. The dark, grim aesthetic of the album and the rock vibe of the ballads and anthems were what skyrocketed the album (and the band) to a mainstream audience.

The date is March 22, 2013. My Chemical Romance officially announce their breakup on their website, breaking the Internet and their fans’ hearts. Yet through absence, discovery occurs. Millions of people find a deep connection to My Chemical Romance’s albums. In particular, the themes of death and childhood

memory in *The Black Parade* ring true to a new generation of angsty teenagers.

The date is July 20, 2016. My Chemical Romance posts a video on their Facebook feed featuring the opening notes of their song “Welcome to the Black Parade.” The Internet explodes into shock. A date is advertised on the video, leading fans to think that a reunion is coming.

The date is September 23, 2016. My Chemical Romance has just re-released their album, now titled *The Black Parade/Living with Ghosts*. The re-release includes the original album and 11 demos and live tracks, showcasing all the rough drafts and sketches used to construct it.

While a reunion would be the ultimate dream for a lot

of fans, what we are getting now is even better. What *Living with Ghosts* aims to do is expose their rich history to the world. Most importantly, *Living with Ghosts* shows that “their memory will carry on.” But in order to do that, they need to assign a leader—their fans. They’re handing them the guidebook to the Black Parade, in order for them to carry on their legacy and help people shape their own lives with their memories. You could say that all their fans are truly living with ghosts, but My Chemical Romance aims to take in those angsty ghosts and help others to create, grow, and carry on.

I first heard Frank at my friend’s house while home from school on summer holiday. A group of us sat in silence as he belted through *channel ORANGE*, an adventure of an album that ended with our collective decision to see Frank in concert. The closest tour location that wasn’t sold out

was Toronto, so we got bus tickets and our passports. We arrived a day early and got a cheap hotel in Chinatown. That night, we got a call from the ticket agency informing us that Frank had torn a vocal chord and would not be performing. Two years later, I was able to

finally see him perform. In a voice that fluctuated from soft and emotional to deep and commanding, Frank stepped through his repertoire. *Every/Every* word was sung back by thousands.

What immediately turns me onto Frank Ocean is his vo-

Thoughts on Frank

Joe Sweeney

cal abilities. He creates a duality, combining smart rhythmic lines that soar into powerful wails. However, underneath the immediate impressiveness of his sound is that of a relatable, beautiful storyteller. Listen to the song “Pink Matter”: Frank begins each verse posing a profound question of life to an unknow “sensei.” The replies he receives only serve to further tantalize. As the verses progress, he begins to lose interest in the ethereal and instead builds into a scream of pleasure that completely obfuscates the previous direction. At the

song’s climax, the song drops into a tight bassline and a feature from Andre 3000, the long-silent genius behind OutKast. Moments like this are commonplace throughout Frank’s work.

This past month, Mr. Ocean has released his long-awaited sophomore showing to even greater fanfare than the his previous work. After a four year hiatus, Frank unexpectedly released *Endless*, a video album that blogs devoured with excitement. Two days later, he dropped *Blonde*, which immediately topped

the charts. The album is stacked with tracks that draw the listener in with a repetition of the formula that worked so well previously. Amongst these songs are explorations into a new stripped down style that demonstrate Frank’s evolving style.

As an avid fan, I can only hope for more of this and possibly some Pittsburgh tour dates...one of which seems realistic.

Apple Music Review

Kate Apostolou

Apple has long been a brand synonymous with simplicity and elegance. So, people who downloaded the latest iOS must have been alarmed when they started receiving text messages that slam onto the screen and animate with lasers. While the new design choices of iOS 10 are at times confusing, there are also clear winners. Listening to music is now significantly easier.

The new Apple Music is one of the strongest reasons to update your iOS. In addition to a visual overhaul, the streaming service now

comes with new features, including more personalized recommendations and song lyrics. The redesign was led from the ground up, with a focus on simplicity. And it shows through the dramatically cleaner interface. Where there used to be small text, various gradients, and cluttered images, there’s now large text, a white background, and fewer images. The new look is bold and fresh.

On a deeper level, the navigation is more straightforward. Your music library is now the landing

page, rather than being buried in the far right tab. It’s also clearly organized into playlists, artists, albums, songs, and downloaded music. The second tab is now “For You,” which shows music recommendations. Along with suggested playlists, it has a My New Music Mix, which similar to Spotify’s Discover Weekly, serves up a personally curated playlist that refreshes each week. In addition, Browse is replacing New Music, Radio is remaining the same, and Search is replacing the previous Connect feature. These changes make it easier for

users to access more valuable features.

Could the redesign be enough for Apple Music to outperform competitors like Spotify? It's possible. Even though Spotify currently has twice as many paid users compared to Apple

Music's 15 million, the iOS 10 changes put Apple back in the game. The redesign helps users access features they love with comfort and ease, and the response is positive. In a recent customer satisfaction survey by JD Power, Apple Music ranked highest

among all music streaming services. Creating customer loyalty instead of frustration is certainly a major step in the right direction.

I remember running to my best friend after hearing Childish Gambino for the first time and asking her if she had heard of this really cool rapper. Immediately, she asked me if I had seen *Community*. Dumbfounded, I replied, "Well, yes, I've seen the show, but what does that have to do with anything?" I was quickly given the rundown on the rapper and his real-life identity, Donald Glover, and subsequently had my "holy sugar-honey-iced-tea" moment.

Although I had my moment, many people might not be aware of Glover's acting and writing history. He was spotted by Tina Fey during a comedy show at NYU; he consequently began writing for *30 Rock* and eventually found himself acting in *Community*. In 2011, he signed with Glassnote Records, and

started his career as Childish Gambino. Throughout this time, he also released a stand-up and performed as a comedian. Recently, he has written, produced, and starred on the TV show *Atlanta*. In an interview with Billboard, he says: "I have my studio there, a whiteboard with the *Atlanta* scripts, a canvas for painting and all my albums and DJ equipment [...] I wake up every morning and I start grabbing things spray-painting the walls, recording, writing. They're all connected for me. It's all about trying to get to the bottom of what being a human is." I can't name many other people in the industry who have the same versatility and passion that he does—he is virtually unrivaled.

In 2015, during an interview with *The Today Show*, Glover comments that,

"Childish Gambino is a period that should come to a close. I like endings." While he signals the end of his rapping doppelgänger, he says he wants to keep making music for the rest of his life. With the traction *Atlanta* is getting, it's unlikely that we will see music from him for a while, and who knows which persona it will come from? All I know is you better keep your eyes peeled for what comes next because it's sure to be worth your attention.

You've been Sleeping on Donald Glover for Too Long

Cassie Howard

Album Reviews

1992 by Princess Nokia

Lucy Denegre



1992, released in early September, is Princess Nokia's second full length album. The underground rapper and electronic artist behind "Versace Hottie" has had a few different monikers over the years, including Destiny and Wavy Spice, but Princess Nokia has stuck the longest.

Her new album is a far cry from some of her earlier electronic work: It's more aggressive rap, referencing 90s favorites like Missy Elliott with beats and samples while remaining individual and contemporary. It's largely an autobiographical album, talking about her New York childhood in

"Bart Simpson" and proudly referencing her Hispanic and Taino heritage in "Brujas." The whole album is a celebration of unashamed and unique femininity, which comes through in my favorite track off the album, "Tomboy." Intense, intelligent, and very danceable, this album kills it.

Body Wash by Mndsgn

Lucy Denegre



Body Wash may come as a surprise to fans of Mndsgn's unique brand of lo-fi hip-hop production. Breaking from a tradition of small and laid-back releases, Mndsgn's latest offering sees the LA-based artist integrating the sounds of funk, soul, and R&B into his special homemade blend. The result is an

uncharacteristically rich, full-length album that's sure to please much of Mndsgn's equally nuanced audience.

Perhaps the most striking feature of *Body Wash* is its accessibility. Funky melodies on songs like "Use Ya Mind" and "Where Ever U R" can easily lure in newcomers, while the spacey, drawn

-out vocals on "Cosmic Perspective" are sure to give listeners a reason to stay. But that's not to say that Mndsgn has lost touch with his roots; there are still plenty of odd interludes and meditative instrumentals to qualify *Body Wash* as a proper sampling of the artist's eclectic sonic profile.

Sunlit Youth by Local Natives

Isabel McCarthy



In the past, Local Natives has crafted some impressive albums. Most notable is *Gorilla Manor*, the band's first album, which cultivated their energy-packed and almost spiritual sound. "Sun Hands" felt like a ritualistic celebration of life, and "Airplanes" featured poetically jonest lyrics. But the band's

consecutive albums don't feel as packed with potential. While *Sunlit Youth* may have some of the same sentiments left over from "Sun Hands," its leading singles can't compete. "Fountain of Youth" and "Past Lives" maintain the band's traditionally lively percussion, but their overall sound feels recycled instead

of fresh. If I wasn't so familiar with Local Natives' past work, I would probably be more excited about lyrics like "I have waited so long Mrs. President/Matriarchs and Teddy Boys, play in houses on the lake." But this time around, the poetry and sound don't coexist as poignantly as they once did.

How To Be A Human Being by Glass Animals

Ryan Aguirre

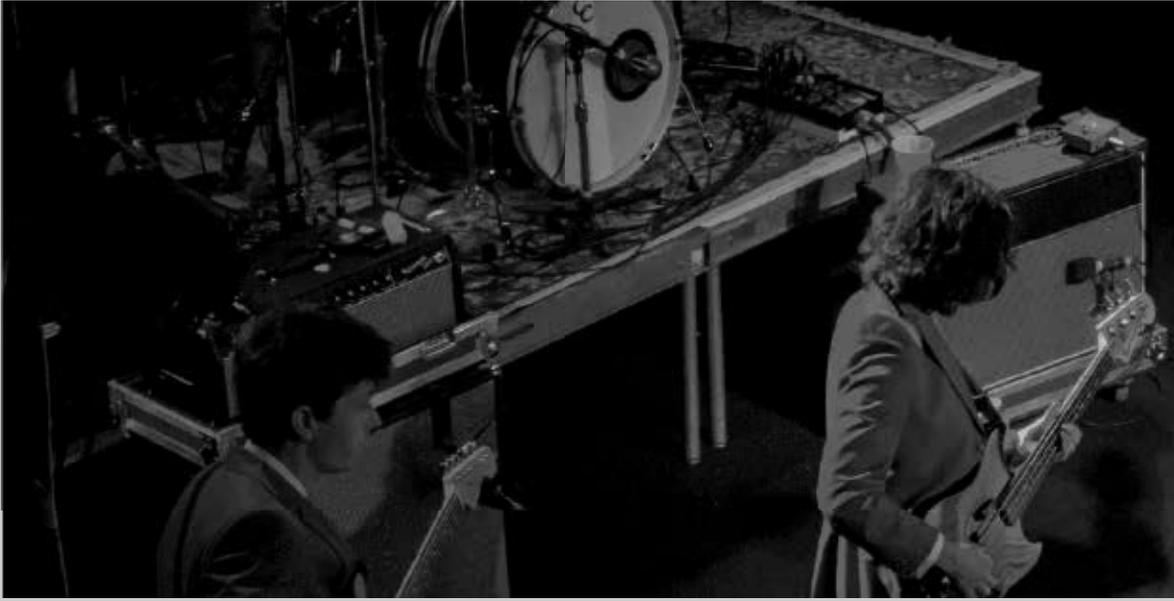


In their sophomore album, Glass Animals manage to sound like an upgraded version of themselves. Beginning with a dream-like harp in the opening seconds of "Life Itself," the album quickly pulls you into the worlds of a handful of colorful characters. The slow, nostalgic R&B beat in "Season 2 Episode

3" puts you in the shoes, or should I say socks, of a couch-potato girlfriend who "eats mayonnaise from a jar while she's gettin' blazed." A haunting choir and the repetition of a bird's eerie call, reminiscent of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven," vividly bring you inside the head of a woman who murdered her husband

in "Mama's Gun." While not every song is a hit, each one deserves a listen (and in some cases many more). I recommend putting on headphones, closing your eyes, and letting yourself be immersed in the many ways one can be a human being.

You've probably
The Cut looks a



noticed that little different.



Very different. Actually, we've completely rebuilt it from the grid up. With everything from a brand new cover to a new type system, get ready to love The Cut even more than you already do.

Special thanks to designer Noah Johnson for developing the new layout with us!





Built to Spill at Mr. Smalls
Photo by Lucy Denegre

the cut

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