



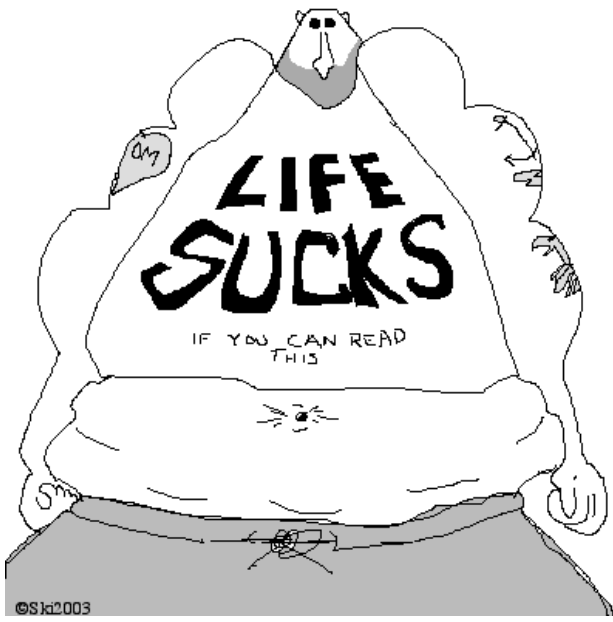
The Real News



Music To Your Mind Edition • Jan 04

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REM Sleep & Other Notes of Note

Another year down the drain. The strains of REM are pouring from the front iMac speakers on New Year's Day evening to the beat of the clicks of the Apple keyboard. 2003 was fairly black and white but there was an awful lot of gray in between. Retrospective resolve is the sleep deprivation of the annual adult all-nighter. By midnight the neighborhood is rocked by the sounds of fireworks. When that pyromaniac tradition began, who knows. It died down because of the subfreezing temp keeps the clowns from roaming the rooflines for unlit Roman candles. Forgetting to reset the alarm clock means only a few hours of deep sleep. Even the non-drinker has blurry eyes from the lack of sleep. It should be the one day to vegetate, but the retailers have crowed about 60% off sales, so the traffic around town is buzzing like its the holiday season. Who needs to fight more crowds on one of the few days off of the year. More money down the drain.

Just like drains, brains get stuffed with ideas. The blockage leads to volcanic results. There are currently three Real News editions in progress. Either the editor is getting scatter-brained or he is in the midst of such a creative blizzard that

should lead to some form of prior restraint. If we are lucky.

The year ended with more audio CDs being piled around the computer workstation. Background music has become the workhorse of the keyboard hack writer. Force feed the bioelectrical impulses to cross both hemispheres to create something original, funny or insightful. Music. That's the key to unlock the next twelve months.

Question of the Year

Why Listen At All?

With all the litigation about music downloads, copyright infringement suits, and blanket subpoenas on telecom companies by the RIAA, the basic question that is never raised in these discussions is why do we listen to music in the first place?

Music is a universal component of all human cultures and society. But the beginnings of music is not well documented and it has only been recently explored to its origins. It is still not clear why music developed into what we hear today.

All events of man can be classified into four basic categories of behavior: eat, drink, procreate and rest. One theory believes that music may be an off-shoot of primitive birdsong; or animal behavior as a way of stalking and hunting prey by luring the animal closer to the group's position.

Or it could have been learned behavior-- watching other animals communicate by cackles and warning signs. Humans applied this knowledge and adapted it using rudimentary logic to communicate between themselves during the hunt, thereby covering more ground and making it easier to capture food.

Even current hunters feel that they become one with nature during the long time in the field waiting for a strike. They learn the telltale signs of animal trails, scent on the wind, where animals breed or feed, and where to wait under the cover of brush.

After a lightning strike, primitive man may have found that cooked meat was easier to digest than raw. They learned to capture fire and use it as a tool. They also could have learned that guttural

sounds could also be used as a tool to communicate basic emotions or commands in their highly dependent, self sufficiency bands.

It may also be as simple as being accustomed to the noise in one's own environment. The jungle and forest sounds or the insects, birds or the wind change during the day and night. A natural orchestra of different instruments probably could be heard at any moment. People get used to sounds around them. In your own home, the creaking sounds of the roof rafters, or the drips in the gutter during a light rain, or the noise of the furnace firing its cycle, do not disturb your sleep because you are used to them. However, if you are spending a night in a new, strange place, the noises are differently and it takes time to adjust to them. Sometimes, the loud, strange sounds or sudden noises lead to unrestful sleep.

Another theory on music believes that the bio-neurologic brain activity is similar to mathematical problem solving. One could equate that music and math/problem solving may have had a similar historic root in primitive times. It is possible that music increased the logic transmitters in the human mind or created pathways like modern computer programs create nodes and modules through subroutines.

People have always multitasked when doing routine tasks. It is easy to understand a man humming a tune while whittling a stick or making a spearhead. It is easy to understand a woman humming a tune while washing cloth on the river rocks. It was early mental exercises during routine, mundane tasks.

If early man was aware that he could control noises like the animals around him, he could manipulate them to his advantage. He could use the volume or tone to show emotion, leadership, or displeasure. He could use noise to scare off predators. In combination with hand gestures, a simple form of communication between tribe members could easily be created and understood. Through this interaction, working in groups, the need would have arisen to communicate to others what the leaders had learned. What rocks made good spearheads; how to capture a prey; where to

build camp; where is good water. Communication needs to be understood but also remembered in order to have lasting value.

Nursery rhymes. Even as adults, we remember them. It is a part of our lives. It is a part of our generation's oral history. Rhymes are easy to remember than complex textual passages. Music may have been the first means of creating an oral history to be passed from generation to generation in order to increase their chances of survival. It must have been found to be a powerful tool. We still use music rhymes to quiet crying infants.

We use music or lyrics to impress the opposite sex. We use music on dates and to celebrate good times. We still use background music to create a peaceful mood prior to falling asleep at night. This may have been the foundation of creating a society's culture, a shared vision of thoughts, ideas and customs.

In today's society, music is in the background of everyday events. In an office, in an elevator, at a restaurant, in a store, in a car, in a bar, or during a movie. But the real test of music today is that it "marks" the times in people's lives. The key events of our lives are marked by the background music we listened to at the time: in high school, your first concert, weddings to funerals.

Music always seems to be lurking around us, like the sounds of the primitive forests. Modern music may be a substitute for the sounds that surrounded primitive man. We use music in the background of our daily work routines. We use it to relax after work. We incorporate the sounds and lyrics over the spectrum of human behavior. Music could have the purpose as acting as an equilibrium balance between our unconscious mind when we are processing tasks in our conscious mind. Music could be the trigger mechanism for the last function of man: rest.

So with all the noise of who owns or who should control music on the Internet, there is still the open question which has no clear explanation: why do we listen to music in the first place? If we can answer that complex question, the matter of royalties would seem de minimis.

(Reprint from December, 2003 edition of **cyberbarf**. www.cyberbarf.com)

The Sound of Rain on Mud

The consolidation of the radio licenses by a few large media companies has killed the independent, free spirit, open music programming of local stations. Syndicated shows gather more national advertising revenue. Talk is cheap. Sports is cheap, too. And host after host speaks to the same topics ad nauseam.

It is executive powerplay that leaders have to change things in to their own image. Right or wrong. Radio is so plain boring vanilla it is unlistenable. Professionals used to have the talent to mix music to entertain. Now, canned programs have mainstreamed elevator music to the masses. The corporate lock-step is even apparent at each commercial break--- all the stations are hitting their ads at the same time now. Even if you flip from one station to another, you get commercials. Sometimes, when media companies own seven stations in the same market, the same commercials you were fleeing from in the first place.

Radio used to be the fastest medium. Live. Spontaneous. It was the choice for daily news. But with cut-backs and push call letter segments, local news is feeble at best. The Internet is quickly gaining on the access speed that radio had commanded over its television and newsprint brethren.

But major media is following its own herd mentality into their self-created tar pit. The business plan most copied to death is MTV. The Cult of the Wandering Teen Disposable Income Tribe. Music videos were a new music medium in the early 1980s. A unique blended artform. MTV had cornered the market when it launched. But over the years, the network has turned its focus to its own dumb reality programs, game shows and melodramas. Pushed aside, to other cable signals, and now off most viewers radar, are the music videos. MTV could stand now for Moronic Television.

So the regular networks and radio opera-

tors are trying to adapt the MTV model to their dying businesses. And they are failing. Because they are missing the point.

The kids wanted their music. Since MTV or their local FM stations did not give what they wanted to hear, they went to the Net and traded burns on Napster. The pundits still scratch their heads on why ratings are in free fall. Youth is abandoning the traditional media outlets because they are not meeting their personal consumption demands.

Only the dumb get sucked into the new strategy of force feeding new stars to the market. American Idols of the world are taking unknowns (signed by the producers to record deals before the show casts) and proclaiming them superstars. Meanwhile, garage bands that have been playing for years, on the cusp of their first big break, are drowned out by the corporate mannequin recording contract cross-marketing crossfire. The big labels are owned by the big media companies that own the radio and television stations. Their own contract acts will get priority over a new independent sound.

It is also why the traditional bean counters are so against music swapping and the rise of the digital age of music. People are getting used to programming their own music. On portable players. They really don't need the professional music director to que a playlist for their daily consumption. One iPod can store more than a YEAR of personal song selections. Freedom. Freedom from the forced limited playlists of the national radio stations, or the marginal next "superstar" teen singer.

Even the bands are thinking out of the box. Do they really need a label to record, distribute or sell an album? No. Technology has advanced to a price point where a home computer media center can substitute for a 144 track studio. Burn a demo CD; upload a website; get on a music service site; watch your music spread by word of mouth. You may not make the quick rich megabuck, but at least its an honest accounting of your work.

So old school music vendors are getting stuck in the mud. It really couldn't happen to a nicer class. Sorry, no rope for y'all.

Face The Music

The louder the Democrats scream into the media cameras the more silent the Campaign becomes.

Howard Dean has the “creepiness” of a dumb Clinton; he will say anything to collect money in his coffers.

Dick Gephardt is the old Dem union Howdy Doody puppet with tangled strings and bitterness of losing his power in the House.

Joe Lieberman is the preachy second banana with the large knife in his back courtesy of his former pal, Al Gore.

John Kerry married money to spend it on his own political pong game of issue changes, backsteps and outright tripping over himself.

John Edwards is the rich lawyer who is still unknown in his own home state and has a message as compelling as a UHF station sign-off signal.

Carol Moseley Braun is now the career unelectable politician who professionally campaigns in order to collect special interest money so she does not have to get a real job in the private sector.

Wesley Clark is the DNC’s strawman to stop Dean’s independence streak from upsetting the soft money Clinton funding raising machine.

Al Sharpton is the trying to be a Jesse Jr. without a playbook, a political base, but with a talk show host always on speed-dial.

The Democratic party is crumbling in front of the candidates eyes but no one can see it because they are blinded by the white reflected light of the White House. No candidate has a viable issue. They are repeating their sound bites that they’d make a better president than George W. Bush.

The Democrats were a conglomeration of small special interest groups, outcasts, downcasts and blue collar workers, against the perceived white upper class Republican bosses. The Holy Grail is the misty admiration of the FDR era of government solving every man’s problems.

People are beginning to realize that for the

past two generations, for every issue raised by the Democrats, from spending millions to now billions to “solve” the problem, the problem still persists. Or the problem is getting worse. The new solution? Throw more money at it. More bureaucracy.

Public education was and still is a local issue. But it has been transformed into the heartbeat of a federal extortion of grant and revenue sharing money.

The roles are the same; the names are just different. Dean is the McGovern outsider; Gephardt is the union candidate; Lieberman the academic Eastern liberal; Kerry is New England progressive; Edwards is the new South democratic businessman; Sharpton is the minority candidate; and Clark is the national Democratic machine candidate. You can find the same cast of characters in the ill-fated 1988 election.

In 1988, the presidential candidates were called the Seven Dwarfs. Gary Hart, Joseph Biden, Al Gore, Bruce Babbitt, Dick Gephardt, Paul Simon, and Jesse Jackson. Michael Dukakis won the nomination and ran a horrid campaign against George Bush. The Dems thought that they had the chance to pounce on the post-Reagan America and push their agenda: against foreign intervention in South America, tax cuts for the rich, big spending projects in home states, excesses of corporate takeovers, the post-stock market crash and job losses to foreign companies. The same national issues of defense spending, the Mideast, the environment, health care, social security have been recycled in each election cycle. Sixteen more years have past and none of those issues has been solved. Because people may finally realize they are unsolvable by the federal government. All the promises to do so are false, illusory and pipe-dreams.

The generational drumbeat of political rhetoric is like a death march to the polls. People are apathetic. People are troubled. People are more worried about getting by without losing their jobs, their savings or their home in a mortgage default. They view politicians with the same glaze as a pile of maggots crawling over a garbage dumpster.

There is no difference between the parties. Bush has spent more than any Democrat would have wet dreamed. But not on Dem pet projects.

Musical Chairs

The Dems having been playing primary musical chairs for a month with an extra chair so not as to offend any potential November voter. Why Al Sharpton gets the amount of stage time is part of the anchor change the party has to its Depression era roots. Leave no special interest behind.

No one gets ahead. No one cares. It's boring. The message is as muted as Kerry's boyhood naive pledge to a teacher that he will "do better" than Bush. How many times does a teacher have to her that in order to know that it is meaningless?

There were three things the party was counting on: a bad economy, a quagmire Iraqi war and lack of special interest spending by Bush. Bush has alienated his own Republican base by drastically expanding federal spending across the board, including new, costly and unproven special interest programs like prescription drug coverage. The challengers response is that "we'd spend more." The Iraqi war continues to drag on as a "police" action, suicide bombers and civil unrest. The Dems had pointed to the lack of the capture of Saddam and the lack of WMDs to criticize the foreign policy of the President. But once Saddam was captured, the assaults lacked any substance in the minds of the American public. The objective of getting Saddam had been accomplished in Baghdad. So the Dems look to the unemployment lines and the "jobless" recovery as their last chance. The CBO reports that the economy grew at 4% last year. Too robust for the argument that the country is on the brink of a depression. And the analogy that Dems will have a better economy, just like the grand days of Clinton era, are false because in retrospect (and indictment) the great wealth creation of the 1990s was based upon fraud, misrepresentations and Enron accounting.

So the Democratic frontrunner Kerry is left with his pledge that he'd "do better" than Bush on (fill in the blank issue). It is a hollow statement for a caretaker social climbing Senator who in 20 years in Congress only sponsored 9 bills. His lack



of candor and leadership is equal to Howard Dean's paranoia secrecy of his embarrassing statehouse deals.

The Republicans have their own problem. Their inauguration party has one chair, a throne really, for W. There are no other candidates, no pretenders or contenders for the throne. Without an active primary season, some insiders fear that the nuts and bolts precinct by precinct organization skills will not be in place by November. The Dean campaign has shown that spending money like a drunken sailor, and importing student rally cheerleaders in Iowa cannot substitute for veteran, political brick and mortar local organizations. The hardcore Republican base of those local organizations don't like Bush's tenure of being the proponent to open immigration/amnesty when more and more of their jobs are being exported to Asia; the massive social spending programs for social security and nationalized health care; the rising federal deficit; and the lack of a final exit strategy from Iraq or even a rotation of troops back home. The problem is that the US has committed more than 70 percent of its troops throughout the world. We are stretching the reserves, and their families, to the brink. Bush can lose these core voters through conduct faster than he can secure the Reagan Democrats (blue collar factory workers). Many of those workers have been deemed "unemployable" and now have part time jobs to get by.

Random Musical Notes

As television executives pile on with knock-off cable shows of the current popular genre, they fail to realize why American viewers like programs that show talented individuals bend metal, transform junk into machines or build impressive furniture in a day. As the country turns to a service economy, the backbone of America industrial machine is becoming a faded Victorian picture. We are on verge of a second arts and crafts movement. And this movement will be fueled by technology. More and more computer users are finding self-entertainment, amusement and creative expression with their machines than a boob tube. Apple Computer is the agent of this change with its photo, movie and music programs which gives the average person the opportunity write, produce, arrange, record and burn their own multimedia creations.

The best videos of 2003 showed their lead singer's vision of the similar theme can be at the opposite end of the spectrum. "Stacey's Mom" by the Fountains of Wayne was an ode to the male fantasy. "It's My Life" by No Doubt was a counter ode of the female psyche. Both were well done.

If Elvis proved anything, it was that one can be more popular in death than in life. The Beatles release of "Let It Be Naked" stripped away the production valves to the raw music. The cynic would say that there was no difference. It was sold to the Beatle fan who can never get enough. So the bonus CD of the 1969 recording session is the fly-on-the-wall makes those fans believe that they are in the session with the legends.

Have you noticed that when rockers begin to show their age, they wind up on CMT?

When Rolling Stone magazine proclaimed the 100 greatest albums of all-time, it was starting the old debate that is purely introspective and subjective. But who on earth could not tell that the list was merely the fancy of Old Jann Wenner dated record collection?

All you have to do is see one episode of VH1's Bands Reunited to determine the meat-grinder existence of the music industry: make a

hit single; do a world tour; heavy drug use; jealously spreads between band members; someone walks out; the band breaks up and goes their independent ways; and the bitterness of the break-up lasts for decades.

Back to the Rolling Stone best debate, things can get even more temple scratching if you dissect things to far: what was the greatest song intro? ("Hell's Bells" by AC/DC?)

The greatest loss when music distribution went from vinyl LPs to CDs is the loss of the cover art and liner notes. That was half of the experience when first listening to the LP. Some artists include a little jewel case booklet but it does not have the same impact of a picture frame size graphic. I would not be surprised that a fine art gallery will have a wing devoted to framed LP sleeves by decade's end.

In order to learn the new iTunes software, I used my limited CD collection. On the second CD, a 1996 reissue of a two out of print LPs, I imported the tracks into the program and found three "bonus" tracks which have never played on any other CD player, including my iMac. To my surprise they fully played through iTunes on the Powerbook. So I burned them into a CDR disc. Now I wonder how many other buried treasure tracks are out there.

My five year old niece got me to watch American Idol with her. I had never seen the show before; it deals with the worst celebrity-wannabe culture/reality show stigmas. Anyone who gets drunk at a bar believes that he can be a multimillionaire singer? No wonder bands who pay their dues in clubs hate the fame the winner gets at season's end.

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