You heard me right...
I said **WIZARD ROCK**!
Two muggle brothers invented a mythical genre, and now it is your duty rock out to it

**Maná**
Tracing the evolution of four starry eyed Mexican rockers, and how they managed to make it big on an international scale

**The End of the Red and White Brick Road:**
The White Stripes’ Final Years

What every royal wedding needs
A royal playlist.

**The Libertines**
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Taking a closer look at the meteoric rise and fall of the British rock darlings
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The Magic of Music: 
Wizard Rock
Julia Fram
Since the release of the first of seven novels in the Harry Potter series in 1997, more than 400 million books have been sold. The books, which tell the story of a young wizard named Harry Potter were originally published in English in the United Kingdom and have been translated into more than 100 languages. The final book in the series, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, was released in 2007 and within 24 hours of its release, more than 11 million copies had been sold. Along with the books’ commercial success, there has been the creation of films, video games, and a new genre of music aptly titled Wizard Rock (wrock).

The first and most successful wrock group, Harry and the Potters, typify the genre in terms of their identity, musical aesthetic, and social aspirations. When the performers for a backyard concert planned by brothers Joe and Paul DeGeorge backed out last minute in 2002, Joe and Paul were forced to act quickly. The concert became Joe and Paul’s first performance as Harry and the Potters. Joe and Paul both dressed up as Harry Potter—one actually identifying as Harry from the future—and sang songs from the character’s point of view. For example, in the song “I am a Wizard,” from their first album, the brothers sing, “I’m a lonely boy, I live beneath a staircase… The Dursleys are my guardians. They are so mean and evil. If only I had some magic powers surely I could make them tremble.” The lyrical content of the song, which emphasizes the connection to the Potter series in a humorous way, is typical of the legions of groups that came after them, such as Draco and the Malfoys, the Moaning Myrtles, and Kingsley and the Shackletons. Wrock bands are known for dressing up like specific characters and singing about topics related to the book in order to celebrate and pay homage to the Harry Potter series.

Harry and the Potters further established the mold for subsequent wrock groups by writing, producing, and distributing their own music. Most wrock artists are not highly trained musicians, yet they write and record their own music, embracing a “do-it-yourself” spirit evocative of late 1970s Punk bands like The Ramones. Lyrical creativity and spirit seems to be more important to wrock music than talent. According to the band’s website, Harry and the Potters actually categorizes themselves as a punk rock band. To distribute their music, wrock groups use social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, and Youtube. Social networking websites have not only connected a substantial amount of the Potter franchise’s fans with wrock music, but also fostered a special sense of community among fans and bands. For example, Harry and the Potters organized a massive concert in Harvard Yard, Cambridge on the night that Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows was to be released in July 2007. The success of the “Wizardstock in Hogwarts Yard,” event, which involved multiple wrock bands and 10 to 15,000 people attended, can largely be attributed to the distribution power of social networking sites.

One social aspiration of many Wrock musicians is to encourage people to celebrate reading and promote literacy. In addition to performing at common concert venues, wrock groups make a point to perform at libraries, schools, and bookstores. During Harry and the Potters’ 2006 summer tour, the band actually gave fans engraved toothbrushes in exchange for book reports. The mindset of many wrock group can be summarized by the motto of the Remus Lupins: “Fight Evil, Read Books.”

In the fall of 2010, Harry and the Potters performed at the Wesleyan campus for the second time in their career. The enthusiasm, energy and humor of their performance moved many in the crowd of jaded Wesleyan students. Jessica Jordan, a Wesleyan student and writer for The Argus described the experience: “The audience was completely engaged in the set the entire time. And. It. Was. Epic. I must say, when two men dressed in British school boy uniforms are in front of you, one rolling on the floor wailing away on guitar, the other manically head banging whilst playing keyboards, and they’re singing songs about Harry Potter, life is pretty goddamn good.” Just as many appreciate the Potter books because of the detailed magical world in which the stories take place, fans like Jordan are drawn to wizard rock to access that magical world through the medium of music.
References


Jim Morrison: Dissecting a Rock Deity
Swetha Mummini
It took Jim Morrison less than four years to go from worshipped rock god to a self-destructive disheveled alcoholic. Dying at age twenty-seven in Paris in 1971 under mysterious circumstances, the frontman for The Doors continues to captivate fans, not only because of the raw talent and rebellious energy he brought onstage, but also due to his disturbing personal life and tragic decline.

Born on December 8, 1943 in Melbourne, Florida, Jim Morrison had by no means an easy childhood. Since his father was a navy admiral, he lived the nomadic existence of an army brat, giving him a perpetual outsider status. Although his parents vowed to never use corporal punishment on Morrison or his two siblings, they used the military’s “dressed-down” technique in which they would scold their children to the point of tears. In fact, by the time The Doors formed, he had claimed to be an orphan and broke all ties to his family. During his teenage years, Morrison, reportedly with an IQ of 149, was a literary aficionado who delved into the works of Rimbaud, Nietzsche, Blake, and Kerouac. These literary figures, in particular Nietzsche, inspired Morrison’s later interest in the Dionysian and his alter ego the Lizard King. After graduating from high school, he briefly attended community college, later transferring to Florida State University and then studied at the theatrical arts department at UCLA. By this time, the rebellious streak of Morrison was already evident, with anecdotes from fellow film students about Morrison urinating between library shelves and sketching macabre figures of violence and sex.

It was also at this renowned film school that Morrison and later Doors’ keyboardist Ray Manzarek met. Initially, Manzarek and Morrison were merely acquaintances until a chance encounter on the boardwalk of Venice Beach in California led to possibility of something greater. When Morrison, who embraced the bohemian lifestyle and hallucinogenic drugs, showed some of his recent song lyrics and poetry to Manzarek, the idea of forming a band came up almost instantaneously. After recruiting John Densmore on drums and Robbie Krieger on guitar, the Doors were formed. They played in clubs across the Sunset Strip and were eventually signed to Elektra Records. When their second single “Light My Fire” hit the radio waves in 1967, the Doors achieved great commercial success and were instantly catapulted to fame. After massive touring, they released their second successful album People Are Strange less than ten months after.
During this period, Morrison began to further explore the connection between rock and theatre. He was interested in the performance of rock music and was heavily influenced by the theatre of the absurd, a work that expressed existential ideals to show a godless universe could not be logically explained. In fact, Morrison was so heavily influenced by absurdist theatre that one piece, Julian Beck’s Living Theatre, became the basis for his newly found Lizard King persona. Under the persona of Lizard King, Morrison treated his crowd in a way never done by previous performers. Whenever he was Lizard King, Morrison manifested dark Dionysian ideals of chaos and delirium. Onstage, he developed this incredible shamanistic relationship with the audience where he acted absurdly to invoke a sense of chaos. In essence, his goal was to sway the audience into a state of neuroses.

Yet, to what extent, did Jim Morrison even believe the persona that he had so masterfully constructed? He once told famous rock writer Ben Fong-Torres towards the end of his career that the whole conception of the Lizard King was “half-ironic” and jokingly seemed amused that critics took this alter ego so seriously. However, those close to him share a diametrically opposed view. According to Manzerek, Jim Morrison wanted to be Lizard King on and offstage, to remain in a permanent state of ecstasy and control. The Lizard King represented a chaotic, nihilistic, anti-establishment way of life. And Morrison became obsessed with projecting this rebellious image with antics such as covering his studio in foam from a fire extinguisher or drunkenly vomiting all over the entrance of the Elektra Records president’s apartment.

Simultaneously, with the rise of the Lizard King, he was also consumed by one of his inner demons – alcohol. Alcoholism was singlehandedly responsible for the destruction of Morrison’s career. By 1968 when the Doors were recording their third album, Waiting for the Sun, his alcoholism reached an all-time high. He frequently showed up to the studio drunk and made it impossible to work with him. Tensions grew and Morrison’s hostility and aggressiveness created distance between him and the rest of the Doors’ members. After the release of Doors’ 4th album The Soft Parade, the infamous Miami ’69 incident occurred, in which a heavily intoxicated Morrison was arrested for exposing himself when performing. As a result, concert promoters were now afraid to hire The Doors for concerts because of Morrison’s hijinks and the band hit a major low-point in its career. Yet, under this less fame pervasive environment, Morrison pulled away from the Lizard King persona and wanted to be taken seriously in his pursuit as a poet. He wrote extensive amounts of poetry during this time; however, it wasn’t well received with during concerts. The crowd wanted Lizard King and “Light My Fire,” but Morrison wanted to be taken seriously as an intellectual.

This artistic divide, along with Morrison’s alcoholism, marked the gradual end of The Doors. Their next few albums lacked the boldness, energy, and enthusiasm evident in their previous works. Morrison himself underwent a transformation, with the once svelte, handsome rocker became bloated and scruffy. He eventually left the Doors in ’71 and fled to Paris with his girlfriend Pamela Courson, barely recognizable, withered from years of heavy drinking and drug abuse. It is in Paris that he was able to achieve anonymity and continue his intellectual explorations. However, alcoholism prevented him from ever reaching the thruts of literary fame and he died in just a few months from what appeared to be heart failure.

Despite his short career, the Morrison legacy continues to live on. However, the conflict that arises when documenting his life is that it becomes impossible to separate the fact from the fantastic. Morrison’s personality and life have been subject to mythification and romanticized heavily by media and fans alike. Even during his own time, the tabloids loved him. Tall tales were splattered throughout popular gossip columns with stories ranging from Morrison pouring multiple drinks on Janis Joplin at a Hendrix concert to throwing a television across the control room during a recording session. Yet, the question still remains, who was Jim Morrison, really? Was he, (A) the tortured nihilistic intellectual, (B) the mystical shaman, (C) the self-indulgent narcissist, or (D) all of the above? I suppose that’s the challenge in introspectively analyzing Morrison’s life; everyone has his or her own opinion on who he truly was. The biographers, the rock writers, the band members, and the groupies all paint their own portraits of this troubling rock star. And perhaps that is the reason that Jim Morrison continues to captivate America; he was more than just a musician, he already was a legend in his own time.
References

Rock plays a very small part in Mexican society today, but one of its bands has come across national recognition and immense success in the American music scene. In 1978, four young boys in Guadalajara, Mexico, inspired by American musicians such as David Bowie, Devo, Bob Dylan and James Brown, formed a band in which they desired to apply all the genres of music they loved with their Mexican culture. They became known as the Sombrero Verdes and initially began playing cover bands of Spanish hits while applying rock techniques and the styles of their favorite artists. They had very little success with their first couple of albums, and eventually during the early 80’s the original group split and Olvera, the vocalist of the group, decided to move record companies as well as hire new musicians to take the place of those that abandoned the group.
In 1990, the semi-new group met at a Warner Music recording studio, and after weeks of work, they released the album Falta Amor with their new name of Maná. Embracing change, they left some of the influences behind and began writing their own material. Maná also strongly embraced Carlos Santana’s style and Olvera incorporated guitar solos that directly reflected Santana’s guitar playing. They also began to focus on themes that reflected the mood in Mexico at the time, instead of focusing on music that expressed sentiments to which many people no longer related. As soon as the album was released, their single “Rayando el Sol” was an instant hit. Within days, Maná rose to stardom. Their modern/alternative rhythms attracted mariachi lovers as well as mainstream pop lovers. Maná also embraced an esthetically cleaner look then most of rockers did, which further created an acceptance of their music.

Maná toured Mexico for years, with tickets selling out almost instantly. In 1992, they released their album entitled ¿Dónde Jugarán Los Niños? which expressed another appealing face of Maná. One of the hit singles, by the same name of album, expressed the fear of an environmental crash that was slowly beginning to engulf the entire word. The direct translation of the title is “where would the children play?” which emotionally targeted a society that placed a high value on childhood. Maná soon became the poster child for environmental movement in Mexico. In 1995, they created the Selva Negra Foundation that aimed at funding projects that projected and saved the environment. Maná publically criticized and encouraged the United States to sign the Kyoto Protocol, which regulated the carbon dioxide emission per country, in a music awards performance in 2006.

Maná gained musical international recognition by 1997. That year they released their album “Sueños Liquidos” in over 36 countries. In the United States, Maná won a Grammy for the album and in Spain they became one of the most popular rock bands. In 2002, Maná teamed up with musicians from Italy, Spain, and England in order to expand the audiences they could reach. The CD was an instant hit which went 7 times platinum in Argentina, Gold in the United States and also reaching position 22 in the Billboard, and number 1 on the pop charts in Mexico. In 2003, Maná announced that “Eclipse” would be their last CD and they began to close the doors that it had opened up for rock music. Surprisingly, Maná made a dramatic comeback in 2006 with their album Amar es Combater. Maná announced that they would also begin to tour again worldwide. The Hispanic community went wild. The CD reached number one on the Mexican charts, number four on the Swiss music charts, number four on the Billboard charts as well as number four for the Billboard Top Internet Albums, and it went four times platinum in Argentina. Today Maná continues to enjoy success in the music industry. On April of 2011, they released a new album and are now preparing for their United States tour.

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Layne Staley
A Tragedy Chronicled in Music
Stephen Jordan
Seattle grunge rock is often characterized by angst-filled lyrics and distorted, rough-around-the-edges guitar sounds – the brainchild of a young generation depressed about the future. No band better fits this description than Alice in Chains, whose music was often a show of angst, depression, fear, and pain. The main driving force behind Alice in Chain’s powerful music was its lead vocalist Layne Staley, whose worsening story of depression and drug-abuse defined his band’s music until his tragic death in 2002.

Layne Staley was forced to deal with hardship at a young age. At the age of seven, he witnessed his parents’ divorce. His father fell out of his life after the divorce. Staley had been told his father had died, but he knew his father was alive and had become a junkie. As Staley grew older, he convinced himself that if he became a rock star, his father would return for him. Staley joined several bands in the Seattle area, mainly playing speed metal. Staley eventually joined the band Diamond Lie with guitarist Jerry Cantrell, bassist Mike Starr, and drummer Sean Kinney. The band played short sets at clubs in the Seattle area, and eventually took on the name Alice in Chains.

In 1990 Alice in Chains debuted with Facelift, which was said to capture the brooding atmosphere and feel of Seattle. The lyrics often dealt with such matters such as death, degradation, drug abuse, and facing off against society. The music of the album featured Staley’s tense, troubled vocals in unison with rough, fuzzed guitar effects. The album generated moderate success, peaking at 42 on the Billboard 200. It was the first grunge album to break the top 50.

By this time, Staley’s drug problems had become very apparent. The final track on Facelift, “Real Thing,” displayed Staley’s drug habits, and the disdain he held for anyone who tried to help him. The chorus repeats the line “Goin’ down the steps on a white line/straight to nowhere,” meaning he was fully aware of the destructiveness of his habits. Around this time, Staley declared in an interview that music was his “only obsession to stay alive.” Furthermore, he finally reunited with his long-lost father. However, their relationship revolved around using drugs and only worsened Staley’s drug problems. Eventually his father left him, and Staley’s depression deepened as his father used him for drug money and was not interested in building any sort of relationship with his son.

Two years later, Alice in Chains released their second LP Dirt. Dirt was much more successful, reaching the sixth spot on the Billboard 200. It was a dark, sinister album that touched on deeper topics than in Facelift, but provided an even stronger insight into Staley’s drug dependency. During the recordings, Staley checked out of rehab and frequently used heroin, marijuana, and painkillers. The whole band was shaken by the death of friend and singer Andrew Wood, who passed away after overdosing on heroin. Staley admitted in an interview that Wood’s death “changed things” and worsened his drug dependency. Other members of the band were dependent on alcohol and prescription medication. Despite the band’s depression and drug problems, they later celebrated their intensity and efforts on the album, which guitarist Jerry Cantrell called “a brutal album.” The opening track, “Them Bones,” spoke of mortality and the fragility of life, and eerily foretold of Staley’s and Starr’s young deaths. Of the album’s lyrics, Staley later stated he wrote about his own experiences with drugs, but regrets that his fans were turned on to heroin. However, his song “Junkhead” was a complete endorsement of heroin and its blissful, euphoric highs. In “Hate to Feel” he lamented that he followed in his father’s footsteps and turned to drugs.

The group completed their last two releases, Jar of Flies and Alice in Chains, in 1994 and 1995, respectively. Both reached number 1 on the Billboard 200; Jar of Flies was the first EP to do so ever. Both albums displayed a more polished, mature sound and included longer, more introspective songs. They lacked some of the speed metal-influenced riffs that the first two albums had, and used long three or four note riffs over Staley’s sorrowful, snarled voice. The lyrics of the albums reflected on drug addiction, death, and Staley’s rough childhood. However, these albums began to reveal the intensity of Staley’s drug dependency, which had turned from a habit into a necessity. After Alice in Chains, Staley stated in an interview that his drug use was “the insulin a diabetic needs to survive.” He claimed heroin and crack...
cocaine were no longer enjoyable to him, but had become an “all-consuming” force in his life. Evidently, Staley knew he was confronting death, as “Sludge Factory” explained his tendencies to get high and disappear from the public for days until his friends started to worry for his life.

In 1996, Staley’s fiancé died of secondary complications caused by drug injection. The singer became increasingly reclusive after this, sinking into deeper depression and drug abuse. After 1996, Alice in Chains rarely recorded and released no further albums. Staley became increasingly reclusive, rarely ever leaving his Seattle condo. Around 1999, producer Dave Jerden commented on Staley’s appearance, saying he “weighed 80 pounds and was white as a ghost.” He eventually grew hostile against his band mates, and chose to interact with them as little as possible. In 2001, he conducted one final interview. In it, he said he knew he was “near death” and had lost the will to live. He also described in detail the extent of the damage heroin addiction had caused on his body. In addition to describing his regret for his drug abuse, he claimed his father’s departure was a traumatizing experience and that that single event had made him turn to heroin. Staley’s friends stated it was not unusual for Staley to disappear “for weeks at a time.” Furthermore, he would often refuse contact with anyone. Because of this, his friends felt unable to help Staley with his drug abuse.

Band mate Mike Starr was with Staley on April 4th, 2002. The two eventually broke into a heated argument; Starr noticed Staley was very sick, but Staley refused to call an ambulance. Starr eventually left Staley, but never called for medical attention. Two weeks later, Staley’s accountants informed his mother that Staley had not withdrawn money in two weeks. His mother then called the police to report that she had not heard from him during that time. His mother and police then entered Staley’s apartment to find a tragic, haunting scene. The remains of the rockstar lay on the couch in the dark with the TV flickering, needle in arm. Staley, who stood at six-foot-one, weighed a mere 86 pounds when he was found. His body was decomposed, as he was supposedly dead for two weeks. An autopsy report revealed that he died from a lethal injection of heroin and cocaine, known as a “speedball.”

Staley’s death was a tragedy among the grunge scene in Seattle. His depression and drug abuse had grown stronger and more devastating throughout Staley’s career and adulthood, but it created some of the most powerful and emotional music of a generation. His life and descent into deeper drug abuse is well chronicled in his lyrics and Alice in Chains music. Their music also garnered significant commercial success with two chart-topping albums and eight Grammy nominations. Staley’s death created a dark legacy over those he knew. Mike Starr, the last person to see Staley alive, blamed himself for not calling the police when he left him. Starr died of a methadone overdose in March 2011. Staley’s mother created the Layne Staley Foundation to help addicts with recovery from heroin addiction. Alice in Chains reunited in 2005 with a new lead singer and has had decent commercial successful and positive reviews, but fail to capture the essence of Layne Staley era Alice in Chains.

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All the intense media coverage of Prince William and Catherine's matrimony and the ongoing talk of royal weddings inspired me to write this article. After researching the top ten weddings songs and 100 most popular love songs, I have come up with my own list of songs and artists that I think are worthy of being on the playlist for that special occasion. While these songs are popular, they may or may not be right for your wedding since the lyrics have to reflect your own personality and style. The songs you choose for this memorable day are very significant because not only does everyone have to enjoy the music, you might also want to play these personal songs again on each anniversary to bring back memories of that magical occasion when you and your partner became one. Looking for the perfect songs for a wedding and picking out the right music and lyrics is actually more challenging that I expected; although there are plenty of songs out there with great dancing beats, you want to be careful with the message and language of the lyrics, since after all, it is a formal event and there will possibly be guests of older and younger generations present. Weddings songs have to be music you can dance to and that give off a romantic vibe while conveying themes of optimistic love, togetherness, and a promising future.

The First Song

Your first dance at your wedding will be remembered for a long time. It should allow the couple to ballroom dance slowly, and ideally be one of the sappiest songs of the night. The first song also sets the mood for the couple and the lyrics should be particularly connected to the bride and groom’s relationship and love story. The following three songs are actually already voted as top hits for weddings songs, especially for the first dance. And I happen to agree with the popular opinion after listening to these for the first time during my research.

When You Say Nothing at All—Ronan Keating: The song has a nice beat and definitely hits the charts for ultimate romance.

From This Moment—Shania Twain and Bryan White: With a male and female duet representing the bride and groom, this song is perfect for a first dance as they sing in harmony to each other and repeat their vows. The song speaks of “give(ing) my hand to you,” starting a life together with someone, and not wanting to be apart. The lyrics are meant for the “I Do’s”.

Amazed—Lonestar: This one is my favorites of the top ten first wedding songs because of the music and the artist’s soothing voice. He also speaks in vows, “I wanna spend the rest of my life… forever and ever.” It’s a perfectly intimate song for expressing great admiration for the one you are marrying.
Dance Party Songs

Besides having that meaningful song for the bride and groom, you’ll want to have appropriate music for the wedding dance party. You can choose something that is fast and fun and still romantic, although how far you want to take it in either direction will depend on your and wedding style. Here are some popular songs that will be great for the dance party!

Any great playlist must include at least one song by Enrique Iglesias. The only problem is that there are so many wedding-appropriate songs by this artist to choose from. My personal favorites are “Could I Have This Kiss Forever” by Iglesias and Whitney Houston, “Hero,” and “Be With You,” which turned up on top 100 popular love songs and top ten weddings songs. During the dance portion of the party, get some sexy partner-dancing going on with “Bailamos.” If you have guests who appreciate Spanish music, they will especially enjoy this song.

Savage Garden is another artist whose songs made it to the tops for weddings. You can’t go wrong with their two most popular romantic hits, “I knew I Loved You” and “Truly Madly Deeply.”

Just the Way You Are—Bruno Mars: With its adorable lyrics and upbeat tempo, this song is the easiest way to make any woman feel beautiful and like the most special girl in your life.

One More Time—Daft Punk: Get the celebration started with this party beat. This could also be a great song on which to end the party.

Every Time We Touch—Cascada: Your guests inner party animals are sure to come out if they haven’t already by this point.

The Time—Black Eyed Peas: Let the younger generation have their fun with this new party favorite. Don’t be surprised if things get a bit heated and dirty on the dancefloor.

My love—Justin Timberlake: Balance out your playlist with this popular R&B song of sweet talks and proposals.

When it comes to lovey-dovey songs, the 90s boy groups like 'Nsync and 98 Degrees are perfect for their romantic lyrics and sweet voices. “I Need Love” and “This I Promise You” by 'NSYNC and “I Do (Cherish You)” by 98 Degrees are repeated hits for weddings grooves.

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Other suggestions for the ‘I Do’ Playlist:

These are some classic romantic songs that seem just right for the farewell reception. You can squeeze them in between the party songs or play them towards the end when guests are getting tired. If the dance floor crowd is diminishing, these tunes can bring them back up since some are perfect for slow dancing.

We Belong Together- Mariah Carey
All My Life- KC and Jojo
I don't Wanna Miss a Thing- Aerosmith
I Wanna Now- Joe
What is Love (Baby Don’t Hurt Me)- Haddaway

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The Closest Thing to Woodstock

Rehan Mehta
On August 16th, 1980 was the first of many legendary rock festivals at Donington Park, a vast open field in the small town of Castle Donington, UK. While this town of 7,000 people remains a completely uneventful place for 362 days of the year, on the remaining 3 days it plays host to one of the largest rock n’ roll parties in the world, the Download Festival. Known as the Monsters of Rock festival from 1980 till 1996, the Download Festival celebrated its 30th Anniversary from the 11th till the 13th of June 2010, and I was there to witness this chaotic, yet beautiful event.

The line-up included, to name a few, AC/DC (who first played at Donington in 1981), Aerosmith, Them Crooked Vultures, Rage Against The Machine, Slash, Motorhead, Stone Temple Pilots and Megadeth, guaranteeing that this would be the best classic/hard rock event of the year. However, and I’m sure anyone who has attended a British music festival would agree, what makes Download so special isn’t just the music, but it’s the entire atmosphere and the vibes that flows through the streets of the village, between the open field, through the music and most importantly, through the people.

I arrived at Castle Donington on Friday afternoon and stayed in a small guesthouse in the village. The house was small and run by a very welcoming and happy couple. Bathrooms were shared everyone, and our hosts served a traditional British breakfast of sausages, eggs, grilled mushrooms and tomatoes every morning before guests left for the festival. I later found out that staying at a guesthouse was considered a gross luxury, as the thousands of regular festivalgoers stayed in tents on designated camping areas. While toilets and hot showers are provided on the campsite, campers brought their own tents and stayed there for the duration of the festival. Some retreated to their tents after a long day, while most partied through the night at one of the many restaurants and pubs located near the campsites. Download also provided special camping sites for families and camping sites with disabled access.

On the first day, after waiting for a couple of hours to enter the massive open field, I excitedly ran in with the crowd and witnessed the most beautiful sight. In the center stood two huge stages, one the main stage, and the other constructed specifically for AC/DC’s performance. Further to the left stood the second stage, named the Ronnie James Dio Stage, in memory of Dio who passed away a month earlier. Three more stages were spread around the field, but were not visible at first glance. They included the Pepsi Max Stage, the Red Bull Bedroom Jam Stage, and the Jagermeister Acoustic Stage – each with its own line-up of artists.

Performances went on simultaneously on each stage and the crowd was constantly on the move to see their favorite artists. Also, though less aesthetically appealing, the area was surrounded on all sides by small food stalls and restaurants, as well as giant beer and liquor bars at frequent intervals.

This was my first exposure to the atmosphere at Download and I felt right at home. There were people from all over the world and of all ages. There were groups of middle-aged bikers, white-collar married couples, university students, stereotypical punk teenagers, and groups of even smaller kids and babies accompanying their rock and roll parents. The beer flowed freely, and the food complimented it perfectly—traditional British beef burgers, fish and chips, British breakfast, fried chicken, Chinese food, pizza, Spanish food, roast pork, waffle houses and ice cream trucks, to name a few items. And then when things couldn’t get any better, the weather struck, in true British fashion.

The annual rock festivals are held from June till August, and during that time of the year it is bound to rain. Festivalgoers are always prepared with large boots and raincoats. The ground gets reduced from lush green grass to a slushy, muddy mess, yet everyone embraces it. Many of the performers came out onto the ramps of the stage to get wet along with the huge crowd that had come to see them.

That brings me to the music. There were four performances that stood out from the rest. One was AC/DC, who have remained one of the greatest live bands for nearly 40 years. Their power and electricity ignited the crowd like no other band. The show began with a short animated video of an out-of-control guitarist Angus Young taking over a train and crashing it. As the train crashes, the screen opened up and revealed a gigantic train wreck. At that moment, Angus, who had yet to take the stage, started playing the mind-blowing guitar riff to the opening song “Rock N Roll Train” (from their latest album Black Ice). Then, out of nowhere, Angus showed up in the middle of the crowd at the end of a long ramp protruding from the stage.

As if the music wasn’t enough, AC/DC kept the fire ignited with several entertaining gimmicks includ-
ing, during the song “Whole Lotta Rosie”, a giant blow up doll of a large woman in her underwear, and a giant bell from which the now sixty-three year old Brian Johnson swung from during “Hells Bells”, a striptease by Angus, and, as is AC/DC tradition, a stage lined with cannons for the closing number “For Those About To Rock (We Salute You)”. The only thing that came close to being louder than Angus’s guitar was the roar of the 100,000 strong crowd chanting his name.

Performing just before AC/DC was the newly formed supergroup Them Crooked Vultures, including Josh Homme, of Queens Of The Stone Age, Dave Grohl, of Foo Fighters and Nirvana, and legendary Led Zeppelin bassist John Paul Jones. Seeing one of the three living Zeppelin members on stage transported me back to the 1970’s. In addition, the band’s self-titled first album is great and has been on the charts all around the world. My favorite song of their set was “New Fang”. I’ll be looking forward to their next album, which is rumored to have a 2011 release.

Another legend who was a treat to watch perform was Motorhead frontman Lemmy Kilmister. While I have never been a Motorhead fan, Lemmy is one of the few classic rockstars who retains his rock star image on and off stage. He is known for his black leather attire, tall hat, facial hair, and his deep vocals. The highlight of the set however, was drummer Mikkey Dee, who performed with the greatest speed and accuracy I have ever seen. His drum set seemed to have a million different pieces, and he used each and every one of them. His solo was breathtaking and the crowd responded with exuberance.

The final performance of the festival was by rock n’ roll superstars Aerosmith. Frontman Steven Tyler, now 63 years old, ran around the stage with the
energy of a 12 year old. His voice, and Joe Perry’s guitar, were as distinct and powerful as ever. Every song was a classic and in contrast to AC/DC’s exciting and powerful style on the first day, Aerosmith brought out all the emotions of the audience on the last day. My favorite moment was their closing track ‘Toys In The Attic’.

This year the Download festival line-up includes Def Leppard, System of a Down, Linkin Park and Alice Cooper. Besides Download, another even larger festival with an amazing line-up is the Glastonbury Festival that has artists like U2, Coldplay, Paul Simon and BB King headlining this year. However, as I said earlier – the music is just one aspect of this festival experience.

I urge every rock fan to make the pilgrimage to one of these British rock festivals, to live on a campsite, and completely submerge yourself in the experience. With the combination of great food, drinks, people and music, what more could you ask for? It will be one of the greatest musical and cultural experiences you will have in your life.

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Looking Back On Gangsta Rap

Eden Engel-Rebitzer
In the late 1980s, many rappers began portraying themselves as gangsters in their lyrics and music videos. Three of the most notorious of such rappers are Ice Cube of N.W.A., Snoop Dogg, and Tupac Shakur. Looking at where these rappers are now and how they reflect on their music gives us some insight into how they justify their profane “street life” lyrics.

Ice Cube of N.W.A. gained notoriety in the late 1980s with his hit song F*** Tha Police. The song included inflammatory lyrics such as “I’m a sniper with a hell of a scope/Taking out a cop or two, they can’t cope/with me.” He asserted that he was both describing the reality of the triple-c in Los Angeles (the Crips, the cops and crack) and making necessary social commentary that is lacking in today’s rap scene. He said, “America would rather see Lil’ Wayne and not Chuck D on your little kid’s bedroom wall. Chuck D can change the world. Lil’ Wayne…ain’t political at all.” He argues that his music was intended as much a conversation starter as it was a depiction of reality and claims in interviews that he feels disappointed in the current rap scene because it promotes escapism with weed, cars, and women instead of confronting the problems facing the Black community. His release of Raw Footage in 2008 attempted to bring reflective songs lyrics back into rap. His acting career, however, includes more escapist movies, such as Are We There Yet, than films with social messages. Ice Cube’s relationship with street life is complex; he sees his rap as social commentary but also a reflection of the reality of 1980s Los Angeles and he challenges popular rappers to use their lyrics to communicate a social message. This justification is complicated by Ice Cube’s willingness to break from this theme for the huge paychecks that come with starring in mainstream films.

Unlike Ice Cube, Snoop Dogg has a long rap sheet including multiple gun and drug convictions. This fits with his often violent and deviant lyrics. 20 Dollars 2 My Name includes the controversial line “Nothing left to do, but buy some shells for my glock/Why? So I can rob every known dope spot.” Snoop Dogg grew up poor and eventually joined the gang the Crips. This suggests that young Snoop Dogg was a true gangster rapper, in that his lyrics represent his own experiences on the street. As his career evolved, he dropped his gangster rap image in favor of a new pimp image. His lyrics regularly degraded woman and he even produced a pornographic film. This period in his career, like his earlier more gangster style rap days, demonstrates apathy towards whomever his lyrics and films might hurt or reflect poorly upon, including the black community. Snoop’s personal life, however, paints a more nuanced picture. He is an involved father and the coach for his son’s football team and said in a recent interview “I just love to love, I love everything and everybody, I’m about peace that’s my spirit.” In the same interview he acknowledged: “Well I’m a business first and foremost so whatever my business is, it’s separate from my personal.” This suggests that his public image of living hard and fast life or being a pimp is at least partially exaggerated as a marketing tool.

Like Snoop Dogg, Tupac Shakur had spent time in jail, which helped to explain and make more believable his lyrics and claims about street life. He was famous in part for his participation in the east coast/west coast rivalry and his lyrics idealize black-on-black violence. For example, his song “Bomb First” includes the lines “It’s not about east or west/It's about niggaz and bitches, power and money, riders and punks/Which side are you on?” Tupac seemed to justify his lyrics by saying that they reflected that he was the victim of an unfairly violent life. In a 1996 interview he said, “What I learned in jail is that I can’t change. I can’t live a different lifestyle…this is it. This is the life that they gave [me] and this is the life that I made.” Tupac claimed that his goal was to end the east coast-west coast rivalry and in the same interview said: “I worked hard all my life as far as this music business to bring about east coast/west coast love and make everybody feel comfortable. I dreamed of the day when I could go to New York and feel comfortable and they could come out here and be comfortable.” While this is an admirable sentiment, he goes on to explain that he could not let attacks on his talent by Biggie go unchallenged even if that was what it would take to the end the fighting. Tupac was eventually killed by the very violence that he idealized in so much of his music. During his life he failed to acknowledge the choice he had in rapping about and engaging in gun violence and east coast/west coast fighting. Of the three rappers discussed here, Shakur demonstrated the least self-reflection and the most hypocrisy in explaining his lyrics; he saw himself as a victim, without agency, of the street violence that his music arguably perpetuated, and in the case of the east coast/west coast rivalry, even caused.
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Likely Lads

The meteoric rise, infamous fall, and undying legacy of the Libertines

Gabrielle Bruney
It's been a long time since rock stars have truly rocked. Iggy Pop has been replaced by Chris Martin. The Rolling Stones have made way for the Kings of Leon. Emo happened. And so many of the most popular bands of the 2000s are bloated, middle-aged versions of their former selves. Green Day made a musical. Dave Grohl keeps churning out mediocre album after mediocre album. Bono insists upon existing. They don't seem to realize they're past the sell-by date on rock relevance, and it's depressing. The naughts started on a sour note. The mercifully brief reign of nu-metal yielded to a decade commercially dominated by only slightly less depressing pop-punk and arena rock. As soon as one cloud lifted, another fell.

There was one bright spot. It arrived early in the decade, received moderate chart success state-side, and quickly fizzled out. Between 2001 and 2004 there was an explosion of young, reckless, and energetic bands playing the classic rock style. The Strokes, the White Stripes, the Hives, the Vines, and many others emerged in that first wave of the garage rock revival. But one band exemplified the scene unlike any other could. The Libertines were the answers to the prayers of an era.

“The Good Old Days”

Carl Barât was very quickly becoming disillusioned. It was 1997, and the eighteen-year-old drama student had discovered that university life wasn't the oasis of intellectual and artistic thought he'd imagined it would be. He lived with a fellow student, Amy Jo Doherty, who thought it would be a great idea to introduce her guitar-playing roommate to her younger brother, a poet. In many ways, the two young men couldn't be more different. Carl was unsure of himself and a bit shy, but a brilliant guitarist. Seventeen-year-old Peter Doherty was bold, and perhaps overly confident. And he couldn't play the guitar for shit.

What they shared was an aesthetic. The wit of Oscar Wilde, the romanticism of William Blake, and ancient tales of legendary Albion formed the building blocks of the Libertine's style—clever, quixotic, and above all, exceedingly British. Carl dropped out of school and moved into an apartment with Peter. They spent their days reading, watching films, and playing guitars, and their nights sleeping head to toe in the same bed. It was Peter and Carl contra mundum. They made a pact: “It's either top of the world or bottom of the canal.”

Peter and Carl were singers, guitarists and songwriters, but to start a band they'd need other instrumentalists. For a few years, musicians cycled in and out of the nascent Libertines. Johnny Borrell did a stint on bass, before going on to form Razorlight. John Hassall, his former schoolmate, replaced him, and was a much better fit. Introverted and rather quiet, John was resigned to playing Peter and Carl's songs and fading into the background of a band dominated by two mammoth personalities. On the drums, the boys recruited Paul DuFour, a fifty-four-year-old jazz player whom Carl nicknamed “Mr. Razzcocks.”

The band played in pubs around London's Camden Town, and slowly but surely, local buzz grew. But no label would sign them. Their first manager, New Music Express writer Roger Morton, abandoned the band after EMI passed on them. Their second manager, an entertainment lawyer named Banny Pootschi, was at first determined to get them signed, but after a year, her interest waned. Worse, John left the band. He'd given up on the Libertine dream, and returned to school to work on his A-levels. Even Mr. Razzcocks abandoned them, moving to Holland.

Things were looking very bad. The Libertines were once again just Carl and Peter. But salvation would come, and from the most unlikely of places—America.

“Boys in the Band”

The Strokes hit London in a big way during the summer of 2001. Peter and Carl liked them, but couldn't help but feel some resentment. Here were some other good-looking young men, slender of tie
and skinny of jean, playing smart, punky, retro rock. Why had the Strokes blown up while their efforts were ignored? As Peter wrote in the The Books of Albion, personal diaries he later published, “The Libertines have been dapper for years now.”

But the Strokes proved what the Libertines had long believed—there was a market for this new music. Following the success of the American band, Banny returned to the fold. She found them a new drummer in Gary Powell, a good-natured American, and arranged for them to play a showcase for Rough Trade Records. At last the wind was blowing their way, and in December 2001, the Libertines were signed by Rough Trade. They were still only three-quarters of a band, but John soon swallowed his pride and returned. It had seemed it would be the bottom of the canal, but now they were headed for the top of the world.

Things moved quickly after they were picked up by Rough Trade. There were glowing NME reviews, and opening slots for the Strokes and the Vines, all before the Libertines had recorded their first single. For that task, Rough Trade enlisted Suede’s Bernard Butler as producer. The two A-sides were to be “What a Waster” and “I Get Along.” Both songs were up-tempo, untamed, and gorgeously obscene. On “I Get Along,” a song that was mainly his undertaking, Carl seemed to be singing the band’s mission statement, sneering, “I get along just singing my song, people tell me I’m wrong—fuck ‘em.” But courting controversy backfired. The songs were banned on radio, and even their first NME cover couldn’t drum up much interest. Their hope lay with their debut album.

Produced by the Clash’s Mick Jones, Up the Bracket is simply a masterpiece. They wore their influences on their sleeves, yet managed to sound like no band before them. They were incredibly articulate punks, wondrously unpretentious intellectuals, geniuses, poets, and just the garage band next door. Single “Time for Heroes” was mostly Peter’s endeavor and describes his experiences in London’s 2001 May Day riots. But even police brutality couldn’t make the Libertines somber. Peter revels in the anarchy of the day, while maintaining his trademark wit, singing that “there’s fewer more distressing sights than that of an Englishman in a baseball cap.” The album’s best track, “The Good Old Days,” is the Libertines at their most restrained, reminding us that “if you’ve lost your faith in love and music, the end won’t be long.”

“Up the Bracket,” the title track and second single, made it to number twenty-nine on the singles chart, eight spots higher than “What a Waster,” but still nothing to shout about. Disappointingly, the album only made it to number thirty-five. But the tide changed after the 2003 NME showcase. The Libertines played a fantastic set; they were tighter than ever, but still their reckless selves. The chemistry between Peter and Carl was palpable as they sang into the same microphone. At the NME awards the next day, they won best new band. Seven years later, the same magazine would name Up the Bracket the second best album of the decade, just below the Strokes’ Is This It.

“Can’t Stand Me Now”

The Libertines were well on their way to major rock stardom. Their first album was well received, and the second would almost certainly have much greater chart success. All they had to do was a few months of touring before heading back to the studio. But as it turned out, it wasn’t to be that simple.

The Libertines had never been ones to shy away from a party, and they welcomed interactions with fans that most bands shy away from. They held impromptu recording sessions, and would simply give away new music to members of their fan community. They’d announce secret shows on their website an hour before taking the stage at a small pub or even a friend’s apartment. The other band members took these parties in their stride, but the somewhat naïve and often too trusting Peter was falling in with the sketchy element of their admirers. Both he and Carl had been partial towards speed and coke, but Peter had progressed to crack and heroin.

His addiction and increasing unreliability were affecting the band. Peter began missing shows. Carl learned all of his parts, scrambling to pick up the slack. Their Japanese and American tours were all but disastrous. At one show, Peter smashed equipment and attempted to light Carl’s amp on fire. He wandered the
Bowery trying to befriend New York's homeless in hopes of meeting a crack dealer. After finding success, he invited the tone-deaf dealer onstage to sing with the band that night at their Bowery Ballroom show. He was AWOL at the outset of their European tour, resulting in Peter's first expulsion from the band. He began assembling a new band, to be called Babyshambles. The tension culminated in Peter kicking down the door of Carl's apartment and stealing money, electronics, and musical instruments.

Three weeks after their anthemic fourth single "Don't Look Back Into the Sun" hit number eleven on the UK charts, Peter plead guilty to charges of burglary and was sentenced to six months in prison. Carl forgave him while he was in jail, and greeted him at the prison gates upon his release, inviting him back into the band. It was time to start on that follow-up album.

When the Libertines began work on their self-titled sophomore album in April 2004, Peter was already back to his old ways. Up the Bracket was an incredibly difficult act to follow, but The Libertines didn't disappoint. The stand-out track was single “Can't Stand Me Now,” an autobiographical song showcasing a touchingly earnest Peter and Carl as they sing of their deteriorating relationship: “Have we enough to keep it together? Our do we just keep on pretending, and hope our luck is never-ending?” But by the time “Can't Stand Me Now” made it to number two and The Libertines debuted at number one on the UK charts, the Libertines were over.

“What Became of the Likely Lads”

After another arrest and multiple stints in rehab centers at home and abroad (one ending a week in which Peter wandered Bangkok, cavorting with prostitutes and reveling in cheap heroin), Carl kicked Peter out of the band for good. The Libertines toured in support of the new album without him, but there was never any thought of a third album without Peter. The Libertines weren't even headliners at their last show, opening for PJ Harvey in Paris.

It was the end of a piteously brief but incredibly influential era. The Libertines had proven that there was life after Oasis, and in doing so, rescued British rock. They broke boundaries between audience and performer, and inspired a generation of musicians. Bands like the Fratellis, the Kooks, and the Arctic Monkeys owe much to the legacy of the Libertines. They sing catchy and clever punky foot-stompers, embrace their regional accents, and are unashamedly and unabashedly British.

But the boys from the Libertines haven't disappeared. From 2005 to 2008, Gary played in Carl's new band, the Dirty Pretty Things. John formed his own band Y eti, but found little success. Peter, the former boy genius, has remained constantly in the spotlight. He became internationally famous for his relationship with Kate Moss and his battles with addiction, released two Babyshambles albums (the first decent, the second great), and an unexpected but pleasantly surprising folk-rock solo album.

At a press conference last year, the Libertines announced that they would be playing at the 2010 Reading and Leeds Festivals (the press conference itself dissolved into one of their famous guerilla gigs). The concerts were a success among both critics and ecstatic fans. It was a good sign that there may be more to come from the men who formed the most promising band of the millennium. In Britain, the Libertines hit a nerve in the national rock nostalgia for bygone eras of fast tunes, bad behavior, and swaggering boys in leather jackets. Whether or not they continue to record, with just two albums, they changed the face of English music and aren't a band the world will soon forget.

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From his early days in a rocksteady band to his later years as a Rastafarian convert and political activist, Bob Marley planted himself deeply into the hearts of reggae fans throughout the world. He was a man who turned Jamaican reggae music into an international phenomenon; he, with the help of a few others, established reggae as a worldwide genre of music.

Reggae first developed in Jamaica in the late 1960’s. Reggae’s origins are in traditional African Caribbean music, American rhythm and blues, and Jamaican ska and rocksteady. Reggae is characterized by a heavy, backbeated rhythm. This means that the emphasis on the beat would be on the second and fourth beat in 4/4 time. This format originated in 1968, sparking a universal cultural trend that has continued, not only in today’s Jamaican pop music, but in music throughout the world. Harmonically, the music is often very simple, and sometimes a whole song will have no more than one or two chords. “Exodus,” by Bob Marley and the Wailers, is almost entirely composed of A-minor chords. Because of the simple and repetitive chord structures of reggae music, it has sometimes been described as having a hypnotic effect on the listener. Reggae song lyrics are usually associated with various subjects including relationships, love, religion, peace, sexuality, injustice, and poverty. There are many forms of reggae including roots reggae, dub, lovers rock, dancehall, and reggaeton.

Bob Marley, who played an essential role in popularizing reggae worldwide, recorded ska and rocksteady records early in his career.

In 1963, Bob Marley formed a group called “The Teenagers” along with Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, Junior Braithwaite, Cherry Smith, and Beverley Kelso. They later changed their name to “The Wailing Rudeboys,” then to “The Wailing Wailers,” then finally to “The Wailers.” Record producer Coxson Dodd discovered the group in 1966 when it was composed of the core trio of Marley, Wailer, and Tosh. In 1972 the Wailers embarked on a tour with American soul singer Johnny Nash and in 1973 The Wailers first major label album Catch a Fire was released. The Wailers eventually broke up in 1974, with each of the three main members pursuing solo careers.

Bob Marley later released eleven albums under the name Bob Marley and the Wailers—four live albums and seven studio albums. The social issues in Jamaica were a big influence on Marley’s music. His best-known hits include “No Woman, No Cry,” “I Shot The Sheriff,” “Could You Be Loved,” “One Love,” and “Three Little Birds.” Marley passed away on May 11, 1981 in Miami due to the spread of melanoma to his lungs and brain. His final words to his son Ziggy were “money can’t buy life.” The album Legend was released three years after his death and it became reggae’s best selling album, going ten times Platinum in the United States, and selling 25 million copies worldwide. In 1999, Time Magazine chose Bob Marley and The Wailers’ Exodus as the greatest album of the 20th century.

When people think of reggae music, the first name that comes to most people’s minds is Bob Marley. Some people consider Marley to be exclusively responsible for the popularity of reggae worldwide. He remains the most widely known and revered performer of reggae music and he will forever be remembered as the King of Reggae.

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“Early in my childhood, when I was about six or seven, I began to get the feeling that there was something different about me.”
–Eric Clapton
As he tells in his autobiography, Eric Clapton grew up with no electricity, constantly changing housemates, and only a camp bed to sleep on in his tiny house. Though he calls his hometown of Ripley, England a happy place, he came to be embarrassed by his origins and began to withdraw himself. Even though he was an illegitimate child, his mother was the focus of much of his young life and he loved her without bounds. This relationship surely had a significant effect on the tragic death of his young son.

Clapton’s son Conor died after falling from a 53rd floor balcony in New York City. He was four years old. Born in Paddington, an area of London, Conor came at a time in Clapton’s life when he had changed from being an atheist to being devoutly Christian: “from that day until this, I have never failed to pray in the morning, on my knees, asking for help, and at night, to express gratitude for my life and most of all, for my sobriety.” Clapton said one aspect of his reasoning for becoming religious was so he could stay grounded in a lifestyle that promotes no humility: “I choose to kneel because I feel I need to humble myself when I pray, and with my ego, this is the most I can do.” Conor came soon after Clapton beat his addiction to heroin. Clapton was “spellbound” upon the first sight of Conor and it changed his life.

Conor’s death astounded and shook Clapton for a long period. The effect upon Clapton could perhaps be measured or indicated by the fact that he dedicates a chapter of his autobiography not only to Conor as a person but also to “the aftermath” of his death. “The first few months after Conor’s death were a waking nightmare, but the condition of shock prevented me from completely breaking down.” He went on to write the well-known “Tears in Heaven” about Conor, and he describes it as the most powerful of the new songs he wrote after Conor’s death. After having become very spiritual, Clapton hoped to rejoin Conor in heaven, and this thought provides perhaps the most resonant, powerful lyrics in “Tears in Heaven”: “would it be the same if I saw you in heaven?” Clapton was a resilient man and artist who was able to overcome his addictions and his young son’s death. Such struggles often provide the greatest material and ammunition for inspired, creative songwriting and artistry in general.

*Unless otherwise stated, all sourced material came from Clapton’s autobiography.

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Bradley Nowell: A Heroin-Addled Talent

Liza Parisky
On May 18, 1996, Bradley Nowell was in Las Vegas, getting married in a Hawaiian-themed wedding to his longtime girlfriend and mother of his child, Troy Dendekker. Seven days later, he was found in a hotel room in San Francisco, dead from an accidental heroin overdose. Just as his band Sublime was on the rise, on the brink of releasing what would become a Billboard Top 20 album, Nowell was dead at 28 years old. His life was cut short at the peak of his success, but he would leave a musical legacy that still remains strong 15 years later.

Born on February 22, 1968, Nowell was a native Californian. His parents Jim Nowell and Nancy Shomler raised him in Long Beach, California, a beach town south of Los Angeles. A disruptive kid who was prescribed Ritalin, Nowell developed an interest in music from an early age. On a month-long sailing trip to the Virgin Islands with his father, Nowell was inspired by reggae music, a genre he later explored with Sublime. He began playing the guitar at 13 and later immersed himself in the diverse Long Beach music scene.

Long Beach was an inspiration for Nowell and Sublime. In their songs, they frequently referenced it by name, sometimes affectionately calling it “the LBC.” For Nowell, this was not only his hometown, but also the place that exposed him to numerous genres of music. Long Beach provided a place for punk, ska, surf, and hip-hop to converge, and Nowell implemented aspects of each of these styles into Sublime’s songs. He even occasionally sung in Spanish, alluding to the Latino roots of Southern California. This eclectic mix of styles is a defining aspect of Sublime, a band that wasn’t afraid to take risks.

Long Beach also served as the founding place for Sublime. Nowell met Bug Gaugh at California State University Long Beach, and along with Nowell’s childhood friend Eric Wilson, the three formed Sublime in 1987. They reveled in local success and formed their own record label, Skunk Records. They were a house party band—heavy partiers who lived in the moment. Even when they signed with MCA in 1994 and began a more serious career, the trio remained laid back and stuck to their punk beach roots.

But even though Long Beach served as a positive musical influence for Nowell, it was also where Nowell’s drug habits developed. Sublime was never shy about its collective love of marijuana, but Nowell fell into heroin in the early 1990s and it would eventually take his life. His widow Dendekker has spoken openly about Nowell’s struggle with drugs, saying, “He wanted to be a rock star. He said it was very rock and roll, you know. Perry Farrell and Kurt Cobain and all those guys did drugs, and Brad wanted to see what it was like.” His curiosity soon became a full-fledged addiction, one that he would struggle with until his untimely death. Despite several attempts to detoxify, Nowell could never fully leave behind the drug. Even at his happiest, a newlywed with a newborn son, Nowell was dominated by heroin. At the Ocean View Motel on May 26, 1996, everything came crashing down. After a 6 A.M. jog on the beach with his beloved Lou Dog, Sublime’s unofficial mascot and fourth member, Nowell collapsed into the familiar routine of shooting up. But this would be his last needle, as Gaugh would find him hours later, unresponsive with foam coming out of his mouth. Both Nowell’s and Sublime’s lives were cut short by his addiction.

Sublime’s self-titled album was released two months after Nowell’s death, a record that was originally called “Killin’ It.” This was the band’s first and only release on its major record label MCA and it received instant attention. While some of this was undoubtedly due to the timing of Nowell’s death, the album remains critically acclaimed and adored by many. It peaked at #13 on the Billboard charts and had gone six times platinum by 2010.

To this day, Sublime still enjoys success, as they can be heard on radio stations across the country. Loyal fans still crave their music, which has prompted Wilson and Gaugh to unite with Rome Ramirez to form Sublime with Rome, which plays Sublime songs. But even though Wilson and Gaugh have come together to finish what they started, Sublime will always be remembered as a band that never reached its full potential, and Nowell as another musician fatally consumed by drugs.
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The punk movement started in New York City in response to the growing over-complication of rock, particularly with the appearance of progressive rock. The great bands of the 1960’s had graduated to superstardom and were making millions. This led to them getting further and further away from their fans. Punk was a return to music that fans could identify with and even play themselves. The style was defined by extremely simple guitar riffs, singers that could hardly sing, and an extremely high tempo. The movement started in the CBGB club in New York where pretty much any band could play. This is where the Ramones, Talking Heads and Patti Smith all began their careers. Punk made the transition to the United Kingdom thanks to Malcolm Maclaren who visited New York and discovered the scene. He then opened a clothing store in London in 1975 called Sex that sold outrageous clothing. He then discovered the Sex Pistols became their manager. The Sex Pistols immediately gained a large following in depression-ridden Britain. The younger generation of the period embraced this music as a form of rebellion against a system that had brought them hard times.

The Clash came out of the same scene as the Sex Pistols. The lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist Joe Strummer came from the band the 101’ers, and the lead guitarist and vocalist Mick Jones came from the band the London SS. The bassist and backing vocalist Paul Simonon and the original drummer Terry Chimes both also tried out for London SS but didn’t make the cut. The Clash formed in 1976 with Bernard Rhodes, an associate of Malcolm Maclaren, as their manager. Rhodes pushed the band to sing about political issues, and this became one of their trademarks. They differed from the Sex Pistols in that the Sex Pistols’ songs were mostly just provocative while The Clash addressed actual issues of the time. Despite the fact that they were only opening for other bands at the beginning of their career they did receive a lot of support from critics who praised their energy and they were seen as potential rivals for the Sex Pistols. The group signed to CBS Records in 1977 and received a lot of criticism for what was seen as them selling out. Nevertheless this did allow them to release their first single, “White Riot”, and their first album The Clash, which both charted well in the UK. The Clash was one of the first bands to incorporate reggae influences into their music. The classic bass line is present in many of their songs, albeit sped up, and they even did covers of Reggae songs such as “Police and Thieves”.

After the release of their first album, Terry Chimes left the band and Nicky ‘Topper’ Headon joined. The group then headlined at a few shows and released a few more singles. This was partly in an attempt to gain popularity in the United States but it wasn’t successful to the extent that they had hoped. This would change with the release of London Calling in 1979. London Calling is considered by many to be one of the greatest rock albums of all times and showed the world the multitude of different styles that influenced them, including reggae, ska, and rockabilly. Both the album and the singles enjoyed great chart success in the UK and the USA. This was helped greatly by the fact that a lot of the songs were “radio-friendly”. They followed this release with more singles and the album Sandinista! In 1980 to very mixed reviews, although it did well in the charts in the US. The band’s last album Combat Rock was released in 1982 and contained even more experimentation. In Nonetheless was the band’s most successful album in both the US and UK.

After the release of Combat Rock the band continued to tour but they started to disintegrate. Headon had to leave in 1982 because of his heroin addiction and Jones was fired in 1983 because of issues within the band. The band kept going and even released another album Cut the Crap in 1985 but the band was not unified anymore and after more fighting they were officially disbanded in 1986.

Despite its relatively short life span, which was in the spirit of punk, The Clash left quite a legacy. They were one of the first and most influential first wave punk bands along with the Sex Pistols. They also inspired many other bands to form such as the Ruts and The Specials. One of their greatest legacies though is the album London Calling, which will be remembered for a very long time. Any doubt that this band has had a huge influence is destroyed by the fact that the band was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2002.
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At a time when reggae music was at the height of its popularity after the release of Bob Marley’s Exodus in 1978, four friends from Birmingham, England decided to form a reggae band that would become one of the world’s best-selling music artists with over 70 million records sold. The group, named UB40, was influenced by the many blues parties they attended as teenagers in the multicultural Balsall Health area of Birmingham. Their love of ska, and reggae inspired such original tracks as “King”, “Madam Medusa”, “Food for Thought”, “Signing Off” and “One in Ten”. 
In the mid 1970’s Brian Travers quit his job as an electrical apprentice after
he had saved up enough money to buy his first saxophone and started a band along-
side school friends Jimmy Brown, Earl Falconer and Ali Campbell. Before they
could all even play instruments Travers and Campbell began travelling all around
Birmingham and neighboring towns such as Leicester and Manchester promoting
their band and putting up posters. The band chose the name UB40 as a reference to
the document issued to people claiming unemployment benefit from the UK gov-
ernment. Because some of the band members didn't even know how to play their
instruments, they created a new, unique sound as a result of their practicing. Thus
the band held many jam sessions around Birmingham trying to develop proficiency
with their instruments until in 1979 when their first gig took place on February
9th at The Hare & Hounds Pub in Kings Heath, Birmingham for a friend's birthday
party. For a few months UB40 performed at friends' events and local pubs until they
were noticed by the lead singer of The Pretenders, Chrissie Hynde. Hynde offered
them the opportunity to play as a supporting act to her band. From there UB40
were noticed by David Virr, the owner of the local independent Graduate Records.
With Graduate Records they recorded their first single entitled “King/Food for
Thought” which reached number four on the UK Singles Chart. Their first album
was titled Signing Off, as the band were signing off from or closing their claim on
the unemployment benefit. It was recorded in a boarding house in Birmingham and
produced by Bob Lamb.

On 29 August 1980, Signing Off was released and in October 1980 it entered
the UK Albums Chart; it reached as high as number two in the UK and spent 71
weeks in total on the chart. Since its release in 1980 Signing Off has been certified
platinum and sold over two million albums worldwide. After their great success
in the UK, UB40 finally gained prominent popularity in the US after the release of
their album Labour of Love in which they performed covers of many popular songs.
The album featured a cover of “Red Red Wine” originally by Neil Diamond which
remained on the charts for over 100 weeks. Labour of Love reached number one on
the UK Albums Chart and peaked at number eight on the Billboard 200. Contrary
to popular belief “Red Red Wine” was not UB40’s most popular single. Their most
successful worldwide single release is the cover of the Elvis Presley ballad “(I Can't
Help) Falling in Love with You” which was a number one hit across Europe and in
the US.

Today UB40 is one of the most commercially successful reggae acts of all
time in terms of record sales, chart positions and touring schedule. During their
three-decade long career, they have been performing sell-out shows worldwide and
headlining the Reggae Sunsplash music festival in Jamaica as well as spreading reg-
gae to Russia and South America.

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The End of the Red and White Brick Road: The White Stripes’ Final Years

Max Brivic
The White Stripes would like to announce that today, February 2nd, 2011, their band has officially ended and will make no further new recordings or perform live.” It was a neat ending to a raucous and revolutionary band. For all of the White Stripes’ blues-drenched rock n’ roll tunes and mysterious color schemes, their time as a band was wrapped up cleanly in one press release posted on their website.

This announcement did not come as a surprise to many, though, as the band had been inactive since 2007, when drummer Meg White suffered an anxiety attack that forced the band to cancel a leg of their tour. Jack White, the guitarist, pianist, and vocalist for the band, has been prolific at his Third Man Records company since the band's hiatus in 2007, but the band’s future together was always uncertain.

The two-piece band from Detroit began their career with their self-titled debut album in 1999. They named themselves after the white stripes on Meg’s favorite peppermint candies, and since then the red and white peppermint swirl has become their logo and wardrobe. Their fame has moved at a fiery speed, as they rose from indie darlings to mainstream chart success. Their last album, Icky Thump, debuted at number two on the Billboard top 200, a huge milestone for a band that could barely sell out their own living room a few years before.

In 2007, after a highly successful tour that brought them through all the provinces in Canada and to Madison Square Garden, the Stripes announced their indefinite hiatus and Meg has stayed mostly out of the public eye ever since. The infamously shy drummer did make headlines in 2009 when it was announced that she had married Jackson Smith, the son of punk goddess Patti Smith. The rock god pair—perhaps the hipster version of the Michael Jackson/Lisa Marie Presley coupling—married in Jack’s backyard at his house in Nashville, Tennessee.

During their tour of every province in Canada, the Stripes filmed a documentary about their travels. This documentary, Under Great White Northern Lights, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2009 to critical acclaim. Village Voice film critic Zach Baron said the film featured “some of the most subtly shot and well-recorded concert footage ever from a band not named the Rolling Stones.” The black and white film goes deeper into Jack and Meg’s personal relationship then they had ever allowed cameras to go before. The crux of this emotional bond occurs in the final heartbreaking scene of the movie. After their tenth anniversary concert, Jack plays “White Moon” on a piano backstage as Meg suddenly begins sobbing into his shoulder. He consoles her as they sit in silence and then the film cuts to black.

Fans will never know why Meg was crying that night. Maybe she was remembering their long struggle for acceptance in the indie-rock scene. Maybe she was recalling how they nearly had to flee Detroit after their friends turned against them after they had gained some success. Maybe she was realizing this would be their last tour, and that the magic of their early shows together could never be reclaimed. Whatever the reason for the emotional ending of the film, the band clearly knew their end was near as well.

After the release of the movie, Jack kept busy with his other side projects, including his band The Dead Weather, where he plays drums as Alison Mosshart of The Kills sings and scowls across the stage. He also continued recording an eclectic mix of artists on his Third Man Records label, includ-
ing Wanda Jackson, The Green-hornes, Cold War Kids, and even a live comedy recording for Conan O’Brien.

As it stands now, the band’s last public performance was on the finale of Conan’s show Late Night With Conan O’Brien in 2009, when the Stripes played a strange slowed and stripped down version of “We’re Going to Be Friends” in lullaby form. Jack’s face during the melancholic performance suggests that maybe he knew this would be their last performance. The energy and chemistry they once had was gone, and the song arrangement was depressing and boring. It was the beginning of the end for the quirky Detroit band.

Even as Jack kept busy, he continuously hinted at the Stripes’ reunion. In a 2010 Vanity Fair interview just three months before they announced their split, Jack proclaimed that he would get back into the studio with Meg and start fresh. So what happened in those three months between the interview and the press release? Was Jack playing the fans all along, just dragging them through news clip after news clip looking for even a sentence about the White Stripes’ future? Or did they try to go back to the studio and the spark wasn’t there?

Just like all of the other mysteries surrounding the Stripes, the fans will never know the true answer. In their final press release, the band explained that they broke-up because they want to “preserve what is beautiful and special about the band and have it stay that way.” They seem to be telling the world to not poke and prod for answers, but to look back at their improbably successful career and take it as it is.

The Stripes ended their message with words directly to their fans, telling them, “The White Stripes do not belong to Meg and Jack anymore. [They] belong to you now, and you can do with it whatever you want.” The perhaps overly sentimental message acknowledges that The White Stripes are no longer in their control, and that the fans now own the music, the memories, the films and the merchandise. Fifty years from now they might reunite—it’s been known to happen when aging rockers are looking for a burst in their bank account. But for now the band can be celebrated as the eccentric rock stars they are. The rock stars who loved limited edition vinyl releases, secret tiny club shows, taxidermy and red, white and black. Fans of the band will surely never look at peppermint candies in the same way again.

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The year of 1972 was a rarely-seen. One of the few transient moments in the history of pop music, 1972 recorded several influential work created cross the Atlantic Ocean. Pink Floyd debuted The Dark Side of the Moon; Roxy Music published Roxy Music; Nick Drake released Pink Moon. Not any less spectacular than them were the prog-rock album Foxtrot by Genesis and the conceptual album The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars by David Bowie.

The year 1972 was a bridging time in UK’s pop music world. For fans, they had just walked out of the Beatlemania and were expecting an enormous wave of punk starting in the year 1975 with Sex Pistol. Progressive rock, glam rock and art rock became prominent to fill this gap. Genesis and David Bowie are unique among other contemporary musicians for their philosophies, musicianship, and intellectual achievements.

In his album review of Foxtrot, Mark Spicer pointed out that before Genesis and Bowie there wasn’t any actual progress in the progressive rock scene. (Spicer) It was Genesis and Bowie who pushed themselves beyond the limit and called for a revolution. But they did that in different styles. Genesis changed the scene through amalgamating rock with classical while Bowie through exploring the artistic and theatrical expression within music.

After the chart-success sci-fi-themed song Space Oddity, Bowie was trying to free himself from being associated with Major Tom. (Murray) So he created a new figure, Ziggy Stardust, to tell another story and to invite the audience to interpret on their own. (MacDonald) The entire album was vaguely telling a story of extra-terrestrial but human-shaped rock star Ziggy Stardust spending his life on the almost dying earth. The story was set in an near Apocalypse background. Due to depleting resources, earth was bond to destruction and humanity was extincting. Ziggy used to be a rock star, but was now abandoned by his fans because there was no electricity to support his playing. He then was given a job to sing the news everyday until one day he realized that he was a prophet who foretold the coming of the infinities, a group of black-whole jumpers and travelers. Only they could save the earth and the humanity. On the day they came, the infinities took pieces of Ziggy and became visible (for they are made of anti-matter and needed Ziggy’s piece to become visible). Ziggy in the end willingly sacrificed himself.

The entire story appears to be very depressing and pessimistic, but it was actually designed to show the opposed feeling in acting, after taking German dramatist Bertolt Brecht’s alienation effect theory. (Easle) Bowie himself also wished fans to interpret the album as a positive message that hope is what in the end people would have. (Easle) It is also interesting to mention the origin of the name Ziggy Stardust. The name infused Legendary Stardust Cowboy as well as Iggy Pop as in “Z-iggy.”

Being recognized as one of the most influential figure in glam rock scene, Bowie indeed lift up to his fame. Not mentioning the exaggerating staging style as part of the theatre and mime elements in his music, Bowie openly claimed at that time to be sexually gay. So the album created a spectacular advancement in rock music and at the same time pulled it
back in its reputation. Negative critiques on his music
taste flooded the UK media after the album released,
claiming that this time Bowie simply “went too far.”

However, as the homosexual image of Bowie
drew off, the intellectual achievements and musical
significance became clear. With The Rise and Fall of
Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars, Bowie
pushed rock music towards a rock theatre experience.
Just as David himself humbly suggested, “I’m not a
musician, I’m not into music, you see on that level. I
don’t profess to have music as my big wheel and there
are a number of other things as important to me apart
from music, theatre and mime, for instance.” (Murray)

At the same time when David Bowie introduced
his fictional rocker, Genesis went onto a classical tour
in the British rock scene. At the time, the band was
already in its “classic formation,” with Phil Collins as
the drummer, Peter Gabriel as the leading vocalist,
Mike Rutherford as the bassist, Steve Hackett as the
lead guitarist and Tony Banks as the keyboardist. The
music produced during this formation was also at the
top of the pyramid in terms of its musical and intel-
llectual achievements. (Spicer)

The band was started to play the music of progres-
sive rock like other compatriot bands such as Yes,
but in the end, Genesis surpassed Yes in many ways.
Same as other prog-rock bands, Genesis were trying
to create “a new kind of classical music” in the pop
world. (Spicer) But the uniqueness of Genesis’ music
lies in the keyboardist, Tony Banks, as what Mark
Spicer concluded. “It is Tony Banks’ eclectic harmonic
palette, with its frequent chromatic twists and turns,
that contributes most markedly to the distinctive
‘Genesis sound.’” (Spicer)

In the solo Mellotron introduction of the song,
Watchers of the Skies, the chord progression used
in the string of chords were consciously composed
to defy classical tonal syntax. (Spicer) In the main
groove, which is repeated overly when singing the
verse, instrumental part appear in odd time signa-
tures such as 6/4 or 7/8. The Romantic style harmo-
nization of the organ instrumental part throughout
the album reflects Tony’s classical piano education
when he was a child. The same appears also in the
beginning part of Horizon, where one would instantly
recognize the guitar riff as part of J.S.Bach’s Well-
Tempered Clavier Book I Prelude in C. The morse-
code-like bass and drum riff throughout the album
were also the recognizable feature of “Genesis sound.”

Lastly, it is worth pointing out that the last song
that lasts twenty-three minutes long, Supper’s Ready,
were in many ways parallel to David Bowie’s The Rise
and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars.
“As Edward Macan has rightly pointed out, one of the
most memorable features of British progressive rock
was ‘its fascination with epic subject matter drawn
from science fiction, mythology, and fantasy litera-
ture.’” (Spicer) Countless figure were depicted in the
seven-act rock musical such as King Canute, Narcis-
sus, Pythagoras, the Pied Piper and even Winston
Churchill dressed in drag. (Spicer)

Though towards a different interest group of fans,
Genesis to fans who have a classical and rock mixed
background and David Bowie to almost every one,
Genesis and Bowie together changed the rock scenes
of the early 1970s and propagated a rock aesthetics
that would long live in the history. Indeed, the year of
1972 was an extraordinary year with the appearance
of Foxtrot and The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and
the Spiders from Mars.
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