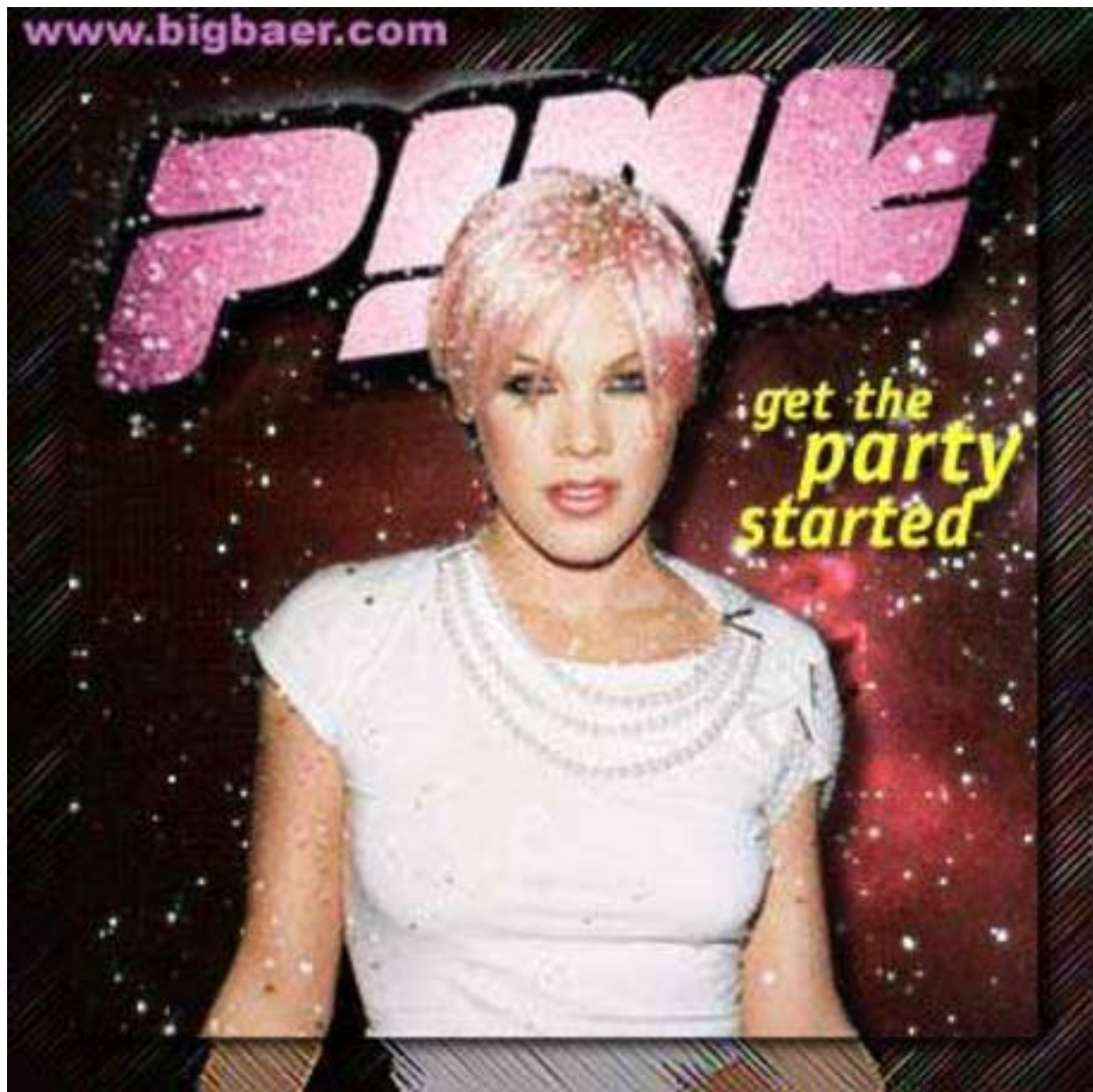


What Constitutes Great Popular Music?

Marc Edward DiPaolo (July 11, 2008)



In 2002, I re-evaluated my music taste ... with the help of my friends.



So I wrote this e-mail to my friends back in June of 2002. I got some interesting responses...

Hi Folks,

I am exploring musicians that I don't normally listen to in an attempt to improve my lackluster musical taste. If I were to buy one album by each of the following musicians, which one should it be? (Please don't berate me if you hate the person, just leave it blank.)

And is there anyone I'm missing from my list who I might like? (Remember my preference for women singers.)

Pearl Jam

Sex Pistols

Ani DiFranco

Puff Daddy

Flogging Molly

Red Hot Chili Peppers

Beastie Boys

Prince

Eminem

Tupac Shakur (spelling?)

Led Zepplin

Rob Zombie

The Who (I have Tommy)

Dave Matthews (I have Before These Crowded Streets)

Luscious Jackson (I have Electric Honey)

Mazzy Star (I have Among My Swan)

Sonic Youth (I have NYC Ghosts and Flowers)

Grateful Dead (I have the Greatest Hits. I hear American Beauty rules.)

Remember, it is in a good cause ... saving me from Celine Dion.

And sorry about this impersonal, mass e-mail crap. I'm just interested in a wide array of answers.

Thanks in advance for any help you can give me.

You folks rock!

All the best,

Marc

* * *

This e-mail is from Hank Stewart, who reminds me of Matthew Perry



[2]From : Hank

Sent : Monday, June 3, 2002 1:41 PM

To : Italian-American Man

Subject : Re: best music

Pearl Jam-Ten

Sex Pistols- Never Mind the Bollocks

PuffDaddy-No Way Out

Red Hot Chili Peppers- Mothers Milk

Beastie Boys- Paul's Boutique

Prince- Purple Rain



Eminem-The Eminem Show

Tupac Shakur- All eyes on Me

Led Zeppelin- IV

The Who-Who's Next

Dave Mathews- Dave Mathews and Tim Reynolds "Live at
Luther College"

Luscious Jackson- Natural Ingredients

Mazzy Star- So tonight that I may see

Sonic Youth- Dirty

Grateful Dead-Workingman's Dead

Hank's Recommendations catered to Marc:

Dashboard Confessional- The places you have come to fear the most

Enjoy Marc.

Talk to you soon.

Hank

* * *

Here's Fergie's response. She looks a lot like Jennifer Garner...



[3]From : Fergie

Sent : Monday, June 3, 2002 1:46 PM

To : Italian-American Man

Subject : Re: best music

Marc,

Of course, I'll have to say that it really depends on when you are listening. In my car, I like to listen to rap, hip hop and r&b. At home, I like jazz, and female rockers. I hope you don't settle on just one cd - buy the top three.

I actually like all your choices. My favorite is Ani DiFranco. And of all her albums, "Out of Range" is the best. ("Dilate" is really great, too - but so very angry.)

I also love love love Mazzy Star.

Finally, despite it all - I would say, at this point, right now, if I had to buy one album, I'd buy Eminem's new one. It is critically acclaimed by EVERYONE. (even people who hate rap)....(see if you can get last week's Time magazine article - they had a nice review of the album).

I love music questions. Please tell me what you decide on, and then how you feel about it.

love,

Fergie

* * *

This is Becca's response. I'd cast Kristin Scott Thomas as her in a movie...



[4]From : Becca

Sent : Monday, June 3, 2002 5:47 PM

To : Italian-American Man

Subject : Re: best music

Hi Marc-

Those look like some good suggestions given you by Hank. I'm trying to think of more female singers -- a random (and perhaps outdated) list coming to mind includes: Indigo Girls, Tori Amos (Little Earthquakes rules!), Nina Simone (everything), Ery'kah Badu (this is really good--title is something about a gun), Sade (her new one, Lovers Rock, is awesome), Portishead, Bjork, Ani DiFranco (I think her older ones are better, more acoustic-- can't remember the names though, sorry)...

Again, totally random, but maybe helpful!

Talk soon and take care,

Rebecca

* * *

And now for Christina's e-mail. She looks like Nicola Bryant from Doctor Who.



[5]From : Christina Wolverton

Sent : Tuesday, June 4, 2002 12:30 AM

To : Italian-American Man

Subject : Re: best music



Pearl Jam---Ten, although if you can pick up a bootleg, it's great to hear them live.

Red Hot Chili Peppers----Blood Sugar Sex Magic, of course!

Beastie Boys----The best Beastie's album ever is Paul's Boutique

The Who (I have Tommy)---Check out anything with Baba O'Reilly on it, even if it's a "Best Of..." album

Dave Matthews (I have Before These Crowded Streets)----Dave Matthews and Tim Reynolds Live at Luther College. Tim Reynolds is an amazing guitarist. He's not in the Dave Matthews Band, but sometimes Dave Matthews plays with him. This is all acoustic and none of the other guys from the band are in it, it's fantastic.

>Remember, it is in a good cause ... saving me from Celine Dion.

-----Good Christ, man! I can't believe you'd even mention Celine Dion!

>You folks rock!

-----Marc rocks!

Love,

Christina

* * *

(Here's an e-mail from David Litvinov. He reminds me a bit of Edward Norton)



[6] From : David

Sent : Tuesday, June 4, 2002 2:49 AM

Subject : Re: best music

Marc -

Since I hate predetermined lists, I'll just make my own for you:

Flogging Molly - you already have "Swagger," I believe so you should get their latest, "Drunken Lullabies." Just great, kick ass energetic, fun as ell music.

You won't like the Sex Pistols, no matter how hard you try to. The old chool punk band for you is the Clash. Try either "London Calling" or "The Clash." They're 10 times smarter than the pistols, and they actually expand their musical range.

Joe Strummer & the Mescaleroes - the former lead singer of the Clash and his new band. His musical



horizons are incredibly broad. He's got everything from rockabilly, to reggae on his latest album "Global A Go-Go."

Beastie Boys - I say try "Check Your Head." It's the first album the Beasties used instruments.

You'd probably like Dashboard Confessional, as Hank says. But also along those lines are Saves the Day, who are a bit faster and poppier. I think you'd like them a lot. Their latest album is "Stay What You Are."

The Bouncing Souls - one of my most favorite bands, ever. They're punk, but melodic. They sing about cute girls that work at delis, hogging the juke box, and about insecurity. For you, I'd recommend "Hopeless Romantic."

Rocket from the Crypt - C'mon. How can I not recommend RFTC? I have a RFTC tattoo, for Chrissakes! Look, man. They're the most innovative band around for the past 10 years. They're the best live band around. They love their fans. They fucking rock. Try "Group Sounds."

Jurassic 5 - fuck Puff Daddy. You want rap, you gotta check out people whose roots are grounded in old school hip hop. Jurassic 5 harken back to a time when rap was more about being able to outdo the rival MC as opposed to talking about how rich you are and how many ho's you've smacked. Check out "Quality Control."

Dropkick Murphys - Irish folk mixed with punk. You once heard their cover of "Finnegan's Wake" and started dancing around the room. Check out "Do or Die."

The Slackers - old school ska. The lead singer has a great voice. Try "Wasted Days."

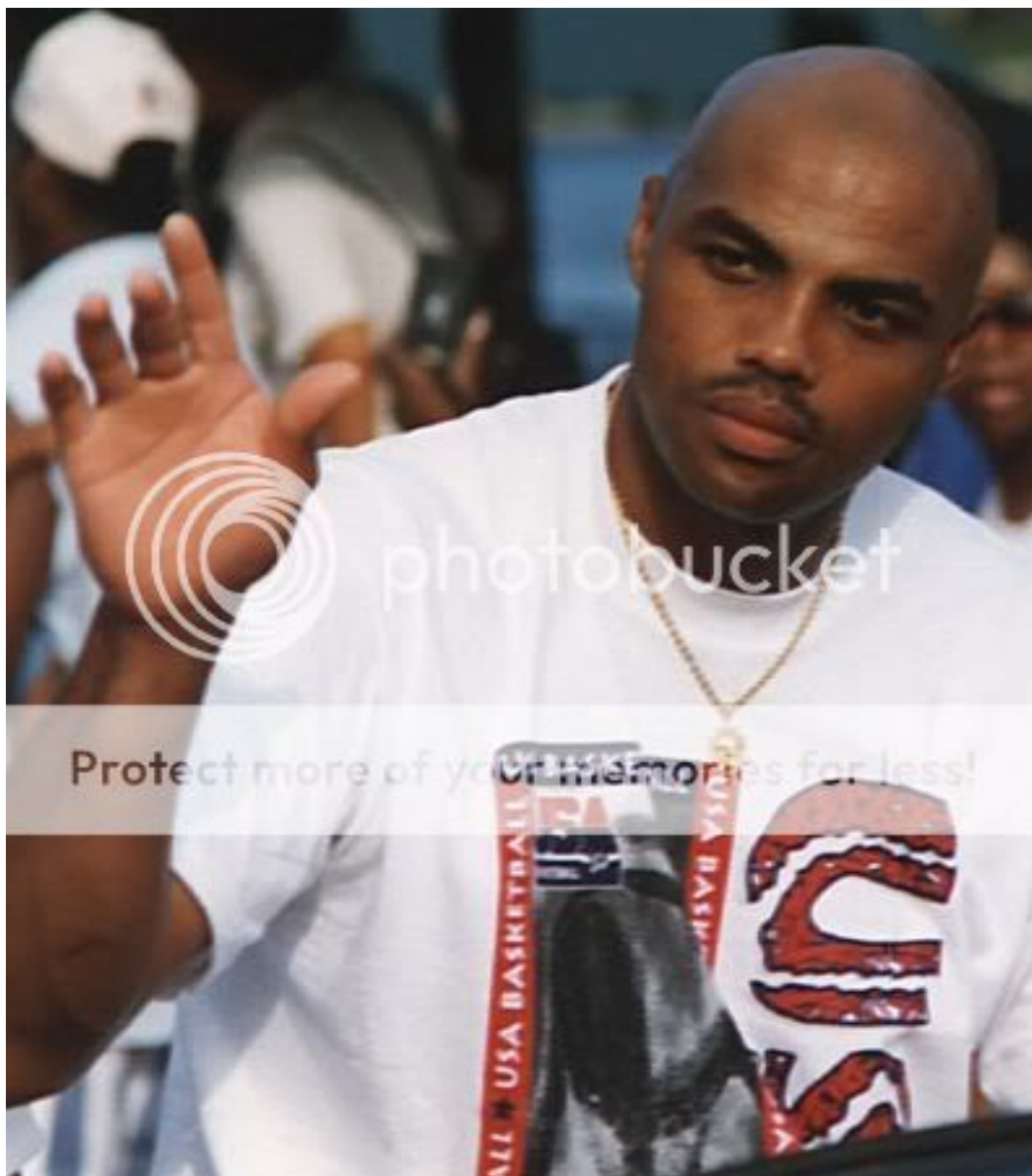
That's all I can think of for now. My advice? Don't try those bands that you've been hearing all your life are so great. Try people who're doing interesting shit now, who you can actually go see. What's the point in listening to music you can't go see performed? However great Flogging Molly's albums are, it's nothing in comparison to their live show.

That's all I can think of for now. Lemme know what you think.

- David

* * *

And now a response from Joe (who kinda looks like Charley Barkley):



[7]From : Joe

Sent : Tuesday, June 4, 2002 3:36 AM

To : Italian-American Man

Subject : Re: best music

Hmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

Okay, here we go ... to add to your list:

Enigma

P.O.D.

Kirk Franklin

System of the Down

Bush



Nickleback

India Arie

Alicia Keyes

Dido

and a army of others I'm still trying to think of. I wouldn't listen to Mazzy Starr though. I call it "music to kill yourself by." If I think of more I'll hit you with them.

Joe

* * *

Here's Boris. He looks like Sean William Scott.



[8]From : Boris

Sent : Wednesday, June 5, 2002 7:04 PM

To : Italian-American Man

Subject : RE: best music



Marc,

I was thinking about your changing music tastes and I thought of something the guys may not be too interested in but that I like very much:

Big band music and Dixieland music -- these genres are very similar. In fact, big band music's origins are in Dixieland music, they just spiced up the melodies a little bit. My two suggestions for artists would be Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie for big band music and The Dukes of Dixieland for Dixieland music. Most songs are instrumental and all of these musicians can be found in the Jazz sections of your local music store :) I think that this is an older form of music that never loses its taste. In fact, if you want to, since you're busy this week, maybe next Friday we can go to see my friend Pete play in the city, like I've been suggesting. We'll go with Hank and Griffin (I don't think Smiley would be interested).

Just thought I'd pass along that info. Hope you are enjoying your new music!!!

Boris

* * *

From: Italian-American Man

To: David

Great list, David.

I'm glad you broke from mine. Gave me a lot of innovative selections.

Kind of like how I prefer Roger Ebert's list of Great Movies. They are so less predictable than the ones on the crappy AFI Top 100 films list. ("Tootsie?" "Close Encounters of the Third Kind?" "Bridge on the River Kwai?" Come on, now!)

But you have me curious.

Why won't I like the Sex Pistols, no matter how hard I try?

- Marc

P.S. - Tried the Clash. Good stuff. I love their cover of "I Fought the Law and the Law Won" ... and "London Calling, of course."

* * *



From : David

Sent : Thursday, June 6, 2002 3:23 AM

To : Italian-American Man

Subject : Fw: best music

Marc -

Sorry I didn't write you back yesterday. I was out late at dinner.

Anyway, the reason I don't think you'd like the Sex Pistols is because they're so shocking and vulgar and just try to piss people off which is very un-Marc.

I'm glad you dug the Clash. The singles collection is an excellent smattering of their stuff. I still highly recommend you get "London Calling."

The Irish stuff is an easy bet with you I think. The Dropkicks are a nice mix of punk and Irish music, which you may or may not like. You already know Flogging Molly, so that's a safe bet as well.

Try out the Bouncing Souls. I have a feeling you'll like them.

Dashboard Confessional is a band basically spearheaded by this one guy. All his songs are about girls and how he can't get any to go out with him, and how he's insecure and lonely. Really whiny. Chicks love the guy. I think he's eh. I say Saves the Day would be more to your liking. A bit faster. A bit happier.

* * *

Here's Margie's e-mail. (By the way, I'd pick Winona Ryder to play Margie in a flick.)



[9]From : Margie

To: Italian-American Man

Hi There Marc,

Celine Dion huh? Hmmmm. I don't know about you. I think I remember your first great love was Reba McEntire???

I like David's choices. My sister and brother-in-law have an extensive collection of punk and ska albums. So if you want any thing obscure let me know. I have them make tapes and CD's for me all the time. I do have a Slackers CD around here somewhere, and a handful of Dead Albums.

I wish I could help you, but I'm about three years behind on the music scene. I haven't bought much these last 3 years, as the only thing I've been listening to is Sesame Street and occasionally some classical music. I've only just begun to listen to adult tunes again. My son can now be heard around the house humming a Marley or Beatles song. We use to play Wylcef's CD because he really liked that, but when he started singing "Just because she dance the go-go, don't mean that she's a ho no..." at my parents house, we banned it for another year or two. He does seem to prefer rap and hip-hop.

Let me know how it goes. I definitely need to catch up to the rest of the world.



Margie

* * *

From: Italian-American Man

To: Fergie

Hi Ferg -

Sorry all my friends have been writing back to you as well as to me. Hope that isn't annoying.

I just wanted to drop you a line to tell you that I've listened to the two Ani DiFranco CDs and they are great. Her music is very powerful and emotional. Sometimes it is so effective, I wonder if it is autobiographical. (Like that Letter to a John, in which she talks about what it is like to be a stripper. Very powerful and very true-sounding.) I'm impressed.

And I got a Mazzy Star CD. Loved the first song ... Fade into You ... and wasn't as into the rest of the CD, sadly. But I'll keep going through your list.

- Marc

* * *

From: Fergie

To: Italian-American Man

Subject: Re: music update

Date: Thu, 06 Jun 2002 14:42:24 +0000

Marc,

I didn't mind hearing from your other friends and their music opinions- it was fun to read - I thought your friend's child singing Wyclef to her parents was pretty funny.

I also don't mind you asking questions about artists. I don't know a whole lot of pop culture facts - even on my favorite artists - I listen. I like. I listen more. So, when I know stuff, I'll share.

In terms of whether something is autobiographical or not - I think that people ask that of all artists (visual, writers, poets, etc.) often - but I was surprised that YOU were asking that. (Being a creative writer yourself). I guess I've just always thought that of course your work is autobiographical - but it's



also fiction - it's art. It doesn't mean that Ani is or was a stripper - (that song is about a lapdancer) - but that her experiences in life allowed her to relate to the life of the stripper so that she could write a convincing tale (song) that a stripper could probably relate to... or any woman or man who has sold his body (including models) because that was all they thought was worthwhile.

So, I think any artist who's worth anything writes autobiographically, because you have to write what you know - but that doesn't mean it's an Autobiography. You base your fiction (or poem, or song...) on your life experiences, but it's a creative work - the biographical aspects of it may get buried with your creative ideas but your experience is still at the base. (Edgar Allen Poe writes convincingly about a maniac - but that doesn't necessarily mean he was a maniac, right?)

Talk to you soon,

Fergie

* * *

From : Marc

Sent : Thursday, June 6, 2002 10:48 PM

To : captainblackadder@hotmail.com

Subject : Re: music update

Hi Fergie,

What you said about writing creatively is true, of course. That is exactly what I do when I write for a fictional character who has lived a very different life from me - I try to mentally construct what it would be like to be them from the emotional experiences of my life that are, in some way, vaguely similar.

I asked you those questions about the lapdancer song because I know several singers who model most of their most emotionally painful songs exclusively from their own lives. And they have lives that are much more ... interesting ... than mine. (After all, I'm a middle-class suburban dude. Pretty boring all around.) That's why I was wondering if she was from that "school," or if she was taking more of an approach where she is speaking for one of her characters instead of talking about the character in the third person.

I like that approach a lot, actually. It is always more intimate and visceral when a person, like Whitman, says in *Leaves of Grass*, "I am a slave, this is how I feel," or "I am a hunter" then, "Meet Sam the Slave" or "Here's Samantha the hunter," but it can also cause momentary confusion and it blurs the line between art and reality even further than usual. Which is not a bad thing, of course. Actually, the blur between fiction and reality is the thing I love to ponder the most. I find it fascinating, but few others that I know like to get that abstract with their conversations.

I think the fact that I entertained the idea that the song was a "true story" - a "real" experience of

DiFranco's - is a testament to her skill as a writer. She did such a good job that I bought it. But that's because it was a superb song.

(I have a feeling I'm not articulating this well. It is at times like this when I hate e-mail the most. Too shorthanded and fast-paced a medium for this kind of thing, I think.)

Be well,

Marc

* * *

This is Ivan, who looks like Tom Hardy, from Star Trek: Nemesis



[10]From : Ivan

Sent : Friday, June 7, 2002 5:07 PM

To : Italian-American Man

Subject : Re: best music

Marc,

Yes, I'm a Heavy Metal guy. BUT-

No, Rob Zombie, Korn, Limp Bizkit, Linkin Park, and any other band you might see on MTV or hear on the radio are not my style at all. Unfortunately my stuff never gets any air time because you have to look for it and people never want to do anything but skim the surface. People consider Rob Zombie and that other



stuff metal but what it really is should be called "rock fusion" because those people take the rock sound and "fuse" other sounds into it (especially rap, which I personally would like to wipe off the face of the earth forever).

Anyway, there are lots of bands in the metal genre that you might love, Marc, because contrary to popular belief metal is extremely varied. Manowar, for example, is definitely metal but does not sound anything like death metal. Anyway, knowing that you own a Manowar album I would suggest that you check out bands like Iron Savior (every album tells a pretty neat science-fiction story, with the lyrics of the songs serving as different points of view and the liner notes adding helpful narration), Hammerfall (pretty catchy power metal from Sweden), Iron Maiden (they base lots of songs on movies and World War II), and Iced Earth (their latest album "Horror Show" offers a theme of old horror movies, so every song is about the monster or main character from a different classic screamer like Dracula or the Creature from the Black Lagoon). With the exception of Iced Earth I'd say you'll probably have to go to Vintage Vinyl in NJ to get most of that, but that's okay because VV has very low prices and a club plan that allows to save \$10 every time you spend \$200 (it helps, believe me). Anyway, good luck with your new music search and write again soon, we still should hang out sometime.

Ivan



* * *

From: Italian-American Man

To: Ivan

I just hear Horror Show. The Phantom of the Opera song was my favorite. And the tribute to The Omen. The Jack the Ripper song freaked me out because it idolized a real life serial killer and not a fantasy monster.

And I love Manowar, even though each album only has one or two GREAT songs on it and the rest are ... blah. But the great songs kick ass.

- Marc

* * *

From: Ivan

To: Italian-American Man

Ha.

Figures.

The Jack the Ripper song is my favorite.

- Ivan

* * *

From : Joe

Sent : Sunday, June 9, 2002 8:52 AM

To : captainblackadder@hotmail.com

Subject : Re: a start

As far as women go further recommendations are, Nelly Fertato, Natalie Imbrulia, Selina, Jewell, Missy Elliot, Eve and Shakira. As far as Mazzy Star ... my sister bought her CD and when I heard it, it was flat black and the music was blacker.



Joe

* * *

From: Marc Di Paolo

To: Joe

Subject: a start

Sent: Wednesday, June 5, 2002 9:44 PM

Hi Joe,

You have inspired me to order Alicia Keys and Enigma from Amazon. I am excited about Keys since I don't know much about her. I will check on the others in the near future.

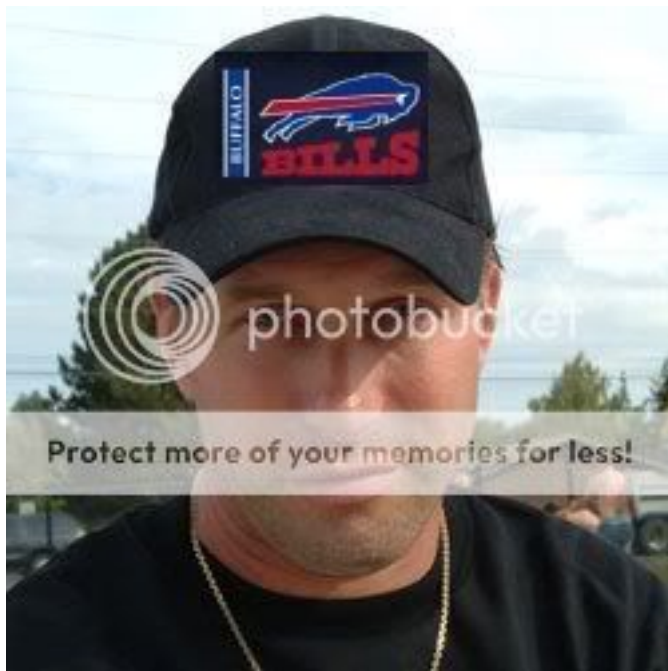
Thanks again, and sorry my friends bombarded you with their choices for me (I didn't expect them to do that to you. The "Reply All" option is a powerful one).

Have fun,

Marc

* * *

And now for our friend from the "Men With Guns" and "My Trip to Italy" posts, Colin Donovan. I forgot to tell you last time, he has a "Baldwin"ish look to him. Like this Baldwin ... Billy ... I think...



[11]From : Colin Donovan

Sent : Friday, June 14, 2002 3:48 PM

To : Italian-American Man

Subject :

WHY ARE YOU KNOCKING CELINE? She is wonderful Marc, you know that. I'm disappointed....but for what it's worth, here's my list for you....

Pearl Jam: Obviously the first three albums (VS., TEN, and PEARL JAM), but Vitaology is good too!

Sex Pistols: Forget about it please!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Ani DiFranco: I can take or leave her personally

Puff Daddy: Marc, I WILL slap you if you're serious. I mean it.

Flogging Molly: "What the fuck?"

Red Hot Chili Peppers: They aren't bad, I really like the song "The Otherside"

Beastie Boys:Greatest hits is good if you MUST try them

Prince: I like the Batman album because it's Batman, but still, Prince is a waste.

Eminem:You're up to two slaps now....

Tupac Shakur (spelling?):Jump to 10 slaps, DO NOT PASS GO, etc.

Led Zeppelin:FINALLY, a good band...actually, I'm not that big a fan, but all of their work is solid. Especially the first album.

Rob Zombie: Dammit...there you go again. Marc, do you ACTUALLY think you'd like this? I know I pick



on your limited tastes, but this is unacceptable. :)

The Who (I have Tommy): Quadrophenia....great album....Greatest Hits is good too.

Dave Matthews (I have Before These Crowded Streets): They are all good. :)

Luscious Jackson (I have Electric Honey): Don't know them...sorry

Mazzy Star (I have Among My Swan):Not bad, but not my fav either.

Sonic Youth (I have NYC Ghosts and Flowers):Oh God....

Grateful Dead (I have the Greatest Hits. I hear American Beauty rules.): Pick up the Greatest hits, and don't turn into a hippie please. :)

OK....now for my MARC LIST:

Jewel: Buy anything...she writes good stuff.

Fiona Apple: Another one that I really like. She only has two albums...both worth having.

Lara Fabian: Sings like Celine, but is WAY hotter. Good stuff here brother.

Heather Nova: A little DiFranco like, but hotter, and sweeter. Check out her first album.

Tori Amos: Get past the man-hating, and the music is actually quite good.

Sheryl Crow: She just keeps putting out solid stuff dude. They are all good.

The Corrs: Irish, sexy, great voices....what else needs to be said?

Natalie Merchant: Solid songwriter...she's good.

Diana Krall: Singer/pianist...sexy goddess of jazz...PLEASE buy everything. She's great Marc.

Sarah MCGlachlan: Solid effort every time...worth buying.

Linda Eder: Hot hot hot! Buy her new album "GOLD", and anything else she's done.

Norah Jones: New chick on the block....give her a chance.

U2: I don't know if you like them or not, but if you wanna try, get "The Joshua Tree", "Achtung Baby" and "All You Can't Leave Behind"

John Mellencamp: He's just fun like Jimmy Buffet.

The Farm Dogs: Bernie Taupin's band. If you can track down this CD, buy it immediately. It's fantastic.

Collective Soul: I really like this band. "Dosage" and "Blender" are pretty good along with the "Hits" disc.

Savatage: Hard rock/metal but they are pretty good. Try "Dead Witner Dead".

Queensryche: Awesome heavy metal...Go and buy "Operation Mindcrime". It has some pretty grim



shit in it, but certainly no worse than what you're trying in that list you sent out. Musically, it's very good album. Also try "Empire" has the song "Silent Lucidity".

James: Go buy the album "Laid" you'll remember the songs from college.

Well, that's it off the top of my head for "new Marc stuff". I would much rather tell you this over the phone, so CALL ME SOON.

Later buddy.

Colin

* * *

From : Ivan

Sent : Tuesday, July 2, 2002 3:34 AM

To : Italian-American Man

Subject : Re: Iced Earth

Marc,

Seriously, I'm very happy that you liked Horror Show, and it is important to note that if you like that album you will like lots of other bands I like. Iced Earth, by the way, has an entire album about Spawn called "The Dark Side," in case you're interested (I'm not a Spawn fan myself but I thought it was worth mentioning).

Next, pick up Iron Savior's "Unification," it's got great songs and a great story. Talk to you next time, and I hope all is well on your end.

Ivan

* * *



From: Griffin

To: Italian-American Man

I love the Defecaters, man. They are pure art. In the middle of their sets during live concerts, they crap all over the stage. And then they eat it.

They're not sellouts like other bands, man.

They don't have merchandise. They don't have a web page. They don't get radio play. In fact, the only way you can get to see them live is if you crap in the alley outside their venue and smear the poo all over your face and show it to the bouncer. Then they let you in.

I'll take you to see them sometime. If you are willing to play with your own fecal matter to see them.

- Griffin

* * *

From: Italian-American Man

To: Griffin

So I guess you haven't been enjoying these e-mails, then?

- Marc

P.S. - Why did it take me a minute to figure out you were joking and made that band up?

* * *

From: Griffin

To: Italian-American Man

Tube socks.

- Griffin



P.S. - Tell your friends from grad school to just hit "Reply" and not "Reply all" when they e-mail. They're doctoral students, right? Shouldn't be beyond them, right?

P.P.S. - Put some crab meat in your buttpussy.

* * *

And, after buying most all of these CDs and listening to them all, these were the singers I decided I liked the best:

Jethro Tull

Leonard Cohen

Dido

Sarah McLachlan (spelling?)

Willie Nelson

Johnny Cash

John Denver

Dolly Parton

Indigo Girls

Tori Amos

India Arie

Alicia Keys

Natalie Merchant

Ani DiFranco

Iced Earth

The Clash

Dave Matthews

You'll notice that most of these were not mentioned at all. I decided to look into them because a) I remembered seeing them on the Muppet Show back when I was very, very small, b) I heard about them on NPR, c) I bumped into them on Internet radio, d) somebody else suggested them.

I'm pleased with my newly expanded musical taste, but Stacey and my brother are upset I decided to like Leonard Cohen. Guess they don't think "Everybody Knows" is as cool as I do. Oh, well.

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