

From: **David Ullman** <dju@davidullman.net>
Date: Sat, Jan 16, 2016 at 2:42 AM
Subject: (Read only this) Break the Cycle: 2015 Mix
To: Kevin Conaway <kevinconawaymusic@gmail.com>

Ho-ly HELL, have I had some problems sending this to you. It seemed every time I tried to start a new line, Gmail would send you the full message. I'm sorry about that.

I edited this one off-line, so I'm hoping that helps. Please disregard the others...

Sorry for the delay. I've been working on responding for a while now, but I was having trouble committing to the extended liner notes of the mix CD this year.

I've ended up taking a much more singular approach--simply writing to you, instead of an all-purpose affair. It's certainly a much more unguarded guide to things. I hope you get just-that-bit of extra context which will make a song or two pop more than they otherwise would.

2015 Mix: Break The Cycle

01: Something From Nothing / Foo Fighters 4:49

Though I've never quite gotten into Foo Fighters, I've always dug the way they handled themselves and the documentaries about or surrounding them (Back and Forth, Sound City). My brother Brian mailed me the Blu Ray of their 2014 HBO series, Sonic Highways, which chronicles the recording of their eighth studio album of the same name. Each episode features the band traveling to a new iconic American city and recording a song influenced by the stories of said city. It's a really engaging look at music history, the band, and the songs. This is both the first song on the album and the first song in the series. It's so badass... The riffs, the lyric... Everytime Dave Ghrol gets to that buildup and release of the "fuck it all; I came from NOTHHHHNNNNNG," I lose my mind!

02: Break the Cycle / The Vespers 4:10

I stumbled across The Vespers while surfing NoiseTrade.com for new and inspiring music. This track fit the bill and then some! I was so taken with it, I immediately pre-ordered their then forthcoming third record, Sisters and Brothers, on which this track appears. The band is, indeed, comprised of two pairs of siblings (the Cryar sisters and Jones brothers). I didn't latch on to much else on their album, which they accurately characterize as "rootsy, southern stomp," but I sure do love this song.

03: Long Time Coming / Saints of Valory 3:32

Someone I met through playing music here in Mpls encouraged me to come see this band with her and her daughter at a club just up the street from my work. I didn't particularly take to their

music, but I do like this song well enough. In some ways, these mixes started out as a place for me to put songs like this--songs I want in my life somewhere to remind me of a moment in time but that don't appear on albums I'll return to. This is one such song. I like it, but I might not otherwise listen to it.

04: Night of the Hunter / Thirty Seconds to Mars 5:41

My brother encouraged me to watch the documentary ARTIFACT, and I actually fell in love a bit with Thirty Seconds to Mars. Not so much that I've dug into their rest of their catalog, of course (because I'm a maniac), but I did largely like the record from which this song is taken: This Is War. Between Flood's production, the visceral lyrics and Jared Leto's emo-scream and harmonies, I can't seem to get enough of this one.

05: Crack Of Light / Luke Brindley 3:29

I actually can't remember where I came across this dude. On a musician DIY thing, I think? I was just struck by the lyrics and the Dylan/Petty vibe. Another one for which I wanted a "home" so as not to lose track of.

06: Love You, Honeybear / Father John Misty 4:39

And another (of the same sentiment). I read an article on NPR called "Sympathy For The Devils: The Lonely Existence Of The Outrageous Musician In An Age Of Civility," and I was intrigued by this guy's picture and reputation. I think I actually bought the album on iTunes without listening. (Sometimes I am desperate to find some music I can believe in.) I didn't even listen a second time, but I kinda dig this one. Plus, it's a love song, and I've found if my mixes are all about my angst and woe (which is at least 75% of why I need music) it makes my wife pretty sad ;)

07: Endlessly / Guster 3:45

Guster is one of those bands for me that suffers by association. When my ex-wife and I were splitting up, I remember she was trying to tell me how great they were and how their happy music always made her happy. A) That does not sound like my cup of tea, and 2) Fuck that band. Forever--just because of that association. Fast-forward twelve years... My (now) wife's cousin, with whom she is very close (he's more like my brother-in-law) asks us to go with him and his wife to see them. We did. We both thought the drummer was cool but found the band boring as all hell. Downloads of their new record came with the tickets, though, and this is the one song that stuck. I find that, in this context at least, I enjoy it. Plus, another love song.

08: Lost In a Crowd (edit) / Fantastic Negrito 5:00

This is the recorded version of the song with which this dude won NPR's first Tiny Desk Concert Contest. I had entered the contest as well, so I was keeping tabs on those video entries they featured each week on their Tumblr blog (hoping for a mention). While I was disappointed my

entry went unnoticed, I couldn't deny that this was a worthy winner. The "edit" part comes from my needing to cut 60 seconds or so, so as to fit the whole mix on an 80-min CD-R. I'm such a fastidious lyric-guy that I cut the verse to which I related the least--something I don't think I've done on one of these mixes since 2008.

09: Ball and Chain / David Ramirez 4:04

I had come across this dude via the NoiseTrade newsletter in 2013. He offered his whole recorded catalog for a name-your-own-price deal. After hearing his song "Bad Days," I downloaded the whole thing and threw him a decent compensation. Dude was definitely coming from the kind of place I want singers writing and singing from. It hadn't worked out, though, for me to see him live until this year. (To be continued in track 18)

10: Veteran Fighter / Joe Pug 3:36

Pug I saw open for Josh Ritter at the Beachland Ballroom in 2009. His closing song was a tune called "Hymn 101." Fucking great song and an outstanding songwriter all around. In the years since, he and I always seemed to be playing gigs on the same nights or some such shit that I couldn't catch a show until this past year. Catch him if you think you might want to. As if this song weren't devastating enough to me, I literally drive down "35 South" most days. Between him and Ramirez, it's like they're reading my unwritten diary...

11: I Didn't Look / Moon & Pollution 2:48

I was offered the (un)enviable slot of singing in the lobby of an independent show in Minneapolis in July--just before my own tour. The idea was to entertain the folks waiting for the doors to open. I'd helped run the door for this series a few years before and remember joking, "It's only taken me three years in The Twin Cities to move 15 feet" (from where I was tearing tickets to where I was performing). Anyhow, this series was something of a more stripped down affair, and this was one of the acts on the main stage. In person, it was just this gorgeous singer and a drummer/programmer. I remember crying during the refrain and ordering this song from iTunes before the next (live) one finished.

12: You and I / Al Church 4:06

This dude also played that same show. He was super-cool to me, as was the chick in the previous song, which I really appreciated. This song was initially included as a memory of the night, but I've grown to really love it. It's like my mix's version of Beck's "Dreams." Irresistible.

13. Lion's Hair / The Whiskey Girls 4:17

The Whiskey Girls are one of "my" cellist Tara Hanish's several groups. Her most successful is the Cleveland act, Seafair. She lived in Cleveland--right up until the evening we played Akron on the Furious Light summer tour. On that night, she packed-up-house and moved to Brooklyn,

NYC--where my drummer lives (he and I met at KSU in 2007). This is also where the other half of The Whiskey Girls lives. So, as it happened, Tara could not join us at Musica but rather did (a few nights before) in NYC. She and Patricia were amazing--even better than I could have imagined. You won't get this from the recording here, but their act features a ton of raunchy comedy! They still play Cleveland semi-regularly. If you're intrigued, check them out. They're a killer live act - <https://www.facebook.com/davidjamesullman/videos/480597475452103/?theater>.

14. Percy Priest (Interlude) / Midland Uprising 2:50

This is a bit of an oddity from Midland Uprising's album, *Awake For Days*. Midland Uprising is Brian Yost and Jeff Gill--my drummer and bassist (respectively) for the tour and our "opening act." That all sounds WAY more fancy than it was. Very simply stated, this improv/wild-recording of a song reminds me of what it was like traveling 2,500 miles with these dudes. As I understand it, the talking you hear in this song was recording during some kind of fly-by-night... rock-through-a-window vengeance for some petty shit in the Akron area a few years ago. For me, it just reminds me of being in a van with these guys and their musicianship.

15. Afraid Of You / Patrick Sweany 4:07

Do you remember, Pat Sweany used to play Tuesdays at The Zephyr in Kent? For years, it was "the place to be on Tuesday nights." I interviewed him once, even, for some college project. Always respected him--and the blues. In a perfect world, for me, I'd be some kind of non-douchey John Mayer-type young/white blues-player type guy. I always (and still) love(d) Eric Clapton and Stevie Ray Vaughn. I ended up gravitating more towards introspective lyrics and more simplistic guitar-playing, but I still love a good blues... I'm not much for Americana, though, so I tend to only seize upon one-track-per-Sweany album; but, goddamn are they satisfying (see 2013 "Every Gun" as well).

16. Ghost in My Head / Andrew Watt 3:34

My brother sent this EP to me. Andrew Watt was a very young guitar player in Glenn Hughes's rock trio (with drummer Jason Bonham--yes "that" Bonham) California Breed, which opened my 2014 mix. This title-track (can that be said of EPs?) is Watt on his own and suits me just fine. Finishes off the "road set" well, too ("And it feels like heaven on the road again / But it feels like hell when I'm alone again")

17. Slipping Out of the Picture / INFINITIES 5:06

At the center of this band is a British immigrant I met in late 2012 called Simon Calder. I happened to be present at Simon's first open mic in Minneapolis after he'd been mugged and began writing songs for the first time since moving to America to teach English and Communications at The University of Minnesota (where I also work). Since that night, he's been super-active in organizing shows and playing any-and-everywhere. His 2013/14 in Minneapolis very much reminded me of my 2007/08 in Kent (wherein you and I first met). The dude rapping

(and also playing bass) played one set with me as well at one of Simon's shows in the fall of 2014.

18. New Way of Living / David Ramirez 3:30

(Continued from track 9) David Ramirez, live, was like Johnny Cash + Bruce Springsteen + his-own-thing. He opened the show I saw with this track, and I was instantly in tears. I suppose it's all relative to what you're going through; but, holy-the-fuck... He's got my number...

19. Mercy / Jewel 3:47

I've been an honest-to-goodness Jewel fan since 1996, and I take loads of shit for it. However, I am unwavering in my respect for her craft, intelligence and talent. Her latest album, a sequel of sorts to her 1995 debut called 'Picking Up The Pieces' is her strongest record... maybe ever. Much of it is relationship-based material not so relatable to a dude who's been happily partnered for more than a decade now. So, I chose this more universally relatable "oh-my-god-I'm-fucked" track. If you're curious, definitely check out the rest of 'Picking Up The Pieces'—and her hair-raising memoir (Never Broken).

20. Paying My Way (edit) / Glen Hansard 3:34

This is the third of my mixes Mr. Hansard closes out, and I'm quite sure his must be the voice most-often represented throughout the 12-year-run. Initially, in 2004, his band (The Frames)'s songs were among those I thought I wouldn't listen to outside of these mixes. My, how things can change... This is another song out of which I edited a few lines to keep with the super-strict motto of "what would I, myself, sing?"

Well, shit... I hope this wasn't too ruined by the accidentally-previously-sent-message(s)—or the extra candid commentary.

I do dearly appreciate this musical correspondence. Thanks so much for your mixes--and your careful listens of mine. It's awfully nice to be able to go back-and-forth with someone who values this shit as much as I do.

Cheers,
D.

PS: The CD went into the mail this afternoon...