

# B-SIDE v8

spring 2020

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PLAYLIST

# Black/Brown Kids Love Hip Hop, but They also Love Rock and Indie: Dissecting the Racial Countercultures in Music Appreciation



Written by Sravya Gadepalli, Designed by Olivia DiMichele

Before anybody comes for me with pitchforks and knives for making listening to music political, just know that every piece of art is political...even music.

You know you do it too. That's right, you. Yet again, you start a private session on Spotify just to listen to your "guilty pleasure" artist in the middle of the night. Who is it this time? Van Morrison, Elliott Smith, or Bruce Springsteen? All your public playlists are littered with artists like Playboi Carti, 2Pac, Lil Uzi Vert, or Megan Thee Stallion, but you and I both know your music taste is more versatile than that.

Don't get me wrong, as a person of color, you cherish these artists more than anything. After all, they are your only representation in an industry widely dominated by white people, but that doesn't stop you from enjoying rock and indie, while riddled with guilt of course. As a first generation Indian-American, navigating my love for music and figuring out which artists were "for me" and which artists were "not for me" was incredibly confusing. Throughout the bulk of my most recent musical sleuthing, I found that when I listened to artists like Led Zeppelin, The White Stripes, or Fleetwood Mac I felt as though the intersection between my race and my love for music was illegitimate. Though these are arguably some of the greatest bands of all time, I found myself thinking "Well, what I'm listening to is great, but this is white people's music. It was simply not made for me."

There is almost an unspoken expectation for people of color to solely explore and support POC art in order to create and sustain our narrative throughout history.

Private Session  
unknown

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However, as somebody who devours music like PacMan, I felt ethnic guilt when I would enjoy music from indie and rock bands. It was almost as if I was shaming my ancestors for liking music produced by The White Man.

Obviously, it isn't as dramatic as I'm making it seem. I am aware that this "problem" sounds like the internal conflict of the protagonist in a Lena Dunham film, but I know that this experience is not exclusive to me. I know that my brown/black friends turn a shade of red when they find themselves listening to Jack Johnson instead of Jaden Smith. Understandably, this directly stems from the lack of black and brown representation in genres such as punk, indie, and rock. These genres themselves seem restricted to artists who are white. So why should listeners of color sustain genres that don't represent them?

This phenomenon of separating "POC music" and "white music" is not only isolated to the individual listener. We see it all the time in popular culture too. Most recently, at the 62nd Annual Grammy Awards, Tyler, the Creator won "Best Rap Album" for *Igor*, and was automatically placed in the "Urban" category, instead of "Pop."

When asked how he feels about the win, Tyler had the same thoughts that every POC has when watching these award shows. "On one side, I'm very grateful that what I made could just be acknowledged in a world like this. But also, it sucks that whenever we, and I mean guys that look like me, do anything that's genre-bending, they always put it in a 'rap' or 'urban' category. ... Why can't we just be in pop?" Tyler, the Creator said. The difference between the white music appreciation/creation experience and the brown/black music appreciation/creation experience lies entirely in both satisfying societal expectations and lending support to artists who look like us. Everything we do is defined racially, so why should music be any different?

When life is seen through the lens of race, which it usually always is for POC, it is hard to remove that veil in terms of what we listen to, regardless of the genre. At the end of the day, I'm not going to tell fellow people of color that listening to artists like Fiona Apple will open their third eye because frankly that would just be a lie and I may be a lot of things, but I'm not a liar.

However, I will say that in an industry made to systematically restrict and put down minorities, it is our job to push the needle further in any way possible. Whether that means getting more representation in genres like punk, rock, and indie or whether it means that you try to listen to an artist "traditionally" claimed by white people, it is up to people of color to determine where our narrative goes from here on out.

That means celebrating unproblematic, genre-bending artists who don't fit any mold. The firm lines of genres and categories are meant to be distorted and blurry. Frankly, good music is made when these hard and fast rules are disregarded entirely. When artists can seamlessly merge elements of multiple genres without isolating any minorities, it destroys the box of musical conformity that listeners are often trapped in.

In the end, what is most important is how these tracks make you feel. Listening to music is supposed to be cathartic and freeing. It should be a place free of judgement or prejudice for the listener. That being said, don't be afraid to step out of your stereotype; you never know what's in store for you on the other side.

# EDEN ARIEL's Debut EP is a New York City DREAMSCAPE

written by NOAH LARSEN  
designed by DREW KALASKY

# ALTARS

Hailing from New York state by way of Manhattan, Eden Ariel lets her environment take up a character of its own in her lyricism on her new EP *Altars* (2020). Opening track "City Rain" is a love story about New York City as much as it is about a person. After its jazzy piano intro, Eden's lilting voice carries the first verse, singing

"I left all my bags  
on the subway yesterday."

She paints us a heart-wrenching story about unrequited love, set against the smoke and rain of Manhattan's gritty beauty. Her songs are at once ethereal, reflective, and raw. Her blend of poetic lyricism, dream-folk and pop allows both accessibility and an almost sage-like perspective on the world around her.

With "If the Butterfly Dreamed Me," Ariel blends surrealist dream logic and aching nostalgia with haunting harmonies and instrumentation that transport the listener to another dimension. The song is evocative of both Lana Del Rey's *Ultraviolence* as well as Nicole Dollanganger's 2015 album *Natural Born Losers*. However, Ariel maintains her own voice and sound, asserting herself as a multi-talented artist to keep an eye on.

She returns to her acoustic roots with the titular

track "Altars." The main star in this song is her crystal-clear, rich voice, as well as her meditative lyrics. "Altars" marks a shift in the album from the internal psyche to a larger consciousness for the world outside. While at first the song appears to be about vulnerability in her relationship, it echoes greater concerns for the "bodies broken by the American dream."

"Goodbye Coney Island" takes this global consciousness even further, as a longing love letter to Coney Island and a pre-climate crisis world. The melodic ballad transforms into a climactic, psychedelic experience, with synths and a guitar solo fading off into eternity.

Finally, Ariel concludes with the optimistic single "Far Rockaway," a dream pop song about escaping the binary constraints of today's world. She sings of a cult-like utopia "beyond reason, beyond rhyme, beyond symbol and sign," echoed by the accompanying music video, released last fall. This is an apt conclusion for the EP, as with her reflective lyrics and ethereal sound comes an overarching sense of hope. *Altars* allows Eden Ariel to articulate not only her own voice, both sonically and lyrically, but the voice of a generation that won't give up on humanity.



# Music: Psychological Torture

*Music is so powerful it has the ability to influence our minds and psychologically torture us*

written by **MAHAVIR BABOOLALL**  
designed by **KALA FEJZO**



Imagine sitting with your friends and a song you all unanimously hate is on the radio. The joke inevitably comes up about how this song is literal torture.

We often attribute to music this kind of emotional power and this ability to help us deal with a lot of anguish or to cheer up our moods. We use music to help motivate us when we are in the gym or when we are about to take a stressful test, etc. Music can say things that we find so hard to say by ourselves; music is almost a companion in our lives. We can observe how embedded music is into every single facet of human psychology.

It isn't a surprise, then, that a small group of people would want to experiment with the potential of torture with music, or with the potential of literal thought control. We can observe this phenomenon with classic examples of CIA experimentation, but also with less obvious examples such as with progressive religious movements or with even established religious music styles. If we attribute so much power to music, then such a powerful force is bound to be used as a weapon of control or torture.

A very passive weaponization of music to "control" the thought patterns of individuals is an ancient style of music called Kirtan. Originating in 6th century India along with Bhakti yoga, Kirtan is composed of solely chant-related music. Songs such as "Govind Bolo Hari Gopal Bolo," consist of a quatrain of prayers that often tell a story of Hindi Deities on some journey or in some quest. The narrative constraint of these songs allows it to be repeated in the same tone and speed for hours on end. The purpose of this type of music is meditative and the constant repetition interrupts normal thought patterns and almost hypnotizes you into a more calm/passive state. Listen to twenty minutes of any Kirtan song and you will realize that at some point, you will stop thinking random thoughts and be almost hypnotized whether you understand the lyrics or not. This is a passive, almost beneficial use of music to help focus the mind. We get a tiny taste of the power of repetition on the mind.

Going to a slightly more significant use of music to control minds, we must look at the

infamous Rajneesh movement that started in India and became famous in Oregon in the 70s and 80s. For those of you who have seen the famous Netflix series "Wild Wild Country," which documents the history of this movement, you would remember how prevalent music was to this group.

Their founder, Osho, created and popularized a style of meditation called dynamic meditation, in which one would violently convulse to the controlling influence of the music in the background. This music was created with booming drums, sporadic flutes and deep synthesizers in the background and it was almost like the music was puppeteering the people's emotions at that moment. The music would speed up and the people would get even crazier. The music would slow and so would the people. The followers would flail their arms, swing their heads, roll around on the ground, jump up and down, and yell on top of their lungs. It was basically an off-putting individual mosh pit.

Nowhere else can we observe such a naked and primal use of music to control the thoughts, and emotions of people. What's even more interesting was that just before the dynamic meditation began, the followers would often go through a peculiar form of guided meditation. Followers would be told things such as "you must dissolve the concept of the individual and melt into the sea of the universe." Things to shape the minds of the followers in order to essentially make them well-behaved and well-controlled followers. The dynamic meditation would be a way to consolidate the guided meditation by attributing extreme emotional discharges to these thoughts. This would often leave the followers too emotionally drained to have any semblance of cohesive thoughts and this false state of drainage would lead into a quieter form of meditation where everyone became silent and the music would fade.

We observe a clearer usage of music to enable and strengthen the promulgation of ideas and the concept of using music to control the behaviors of a group of people. If we take this idea to its most extreme consequence, we arrive at the military applications of music and the full and total weaponization of what we

all hold so dearly to our collective hearts.

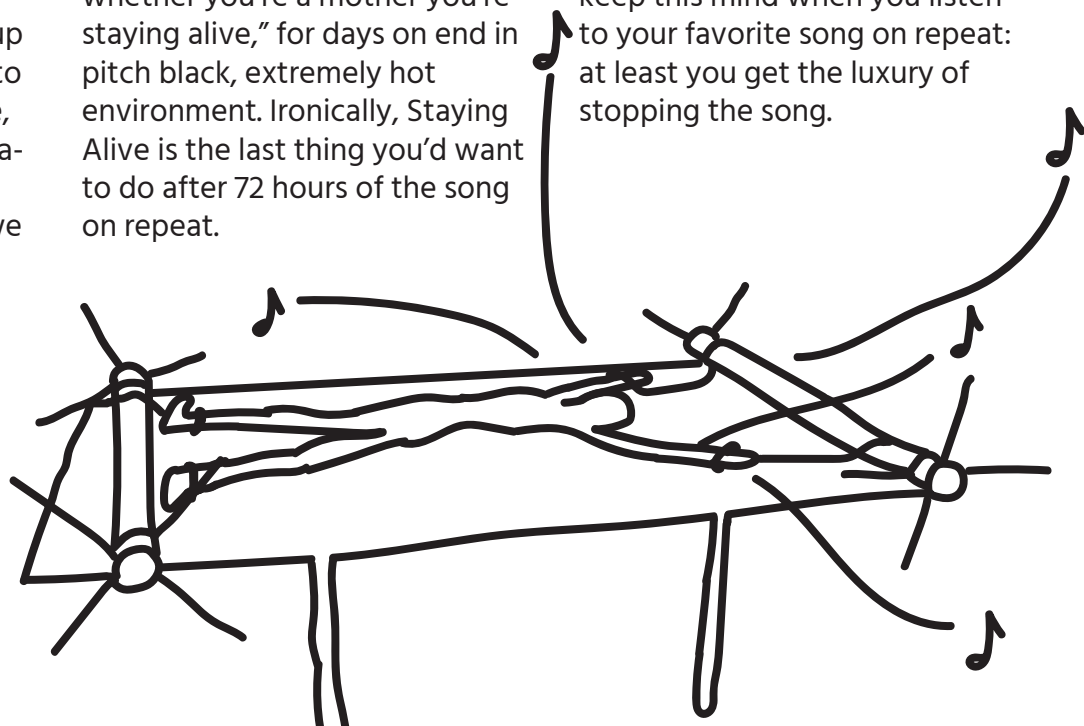
Going the more cliched route, Sun Tzu in "The Art of War" proclaimed: "Begin by seizing something which your opponent holds dear; then he will be amenable to your will." The only way entities such as the CIA were able to identify such tactics of music torture was the simple observation of how prominent music is in many lives. Regardless of who you are, music can more or less affect you in some way. What happens when you give someone too much of a good thing?

You get music torture. Songs like "Staying Alive" by the Bee Gees, The Barney Theme Song ("I love you, you love me..."), "We are the Champions" by Queen, and many more have been mobilized in the systematic breakdown of many people's psyches. Listening to "Staying Alive" might get boring after the hundredth time, but then what? You will still be stuck in your prison cell, listening to 100-decibel renditions of "Whether you're a brother or whether you're a mother you're staying alive," for days on end in pitch black, extremely hot environment. Ironically, Staying Alive is the last thing you'd want to do after 72 hours of the song on repeat.

This gets one thinking about why people make 24 hour-long repeat music videos on YouTube...maybe the military created those albums and has a cute little playlist of these songs to use to break even the toughest mind into a pool of tears and begging for it to stop.

Ruhal Ahmed, a former Guantanamo Bay prisoner explained: "I can bear being beaten up, it's not a problem. Once you accept that you're going to go into the interrogation room and be beaten up, it's fine. You can prepare yourself mentally. But when you're being psychologically tortured, you can't."

The point here is that music is such a powerful psychological anchor, that it reveals the underbelly of how our psyches are composed. The oh-so-subtle increase of the sound and the length of a song is enough to make us lose our minds. It is an interesting thought to keep in mind how fragile everyone is around you. How subtle is the balance of our sanity, and how vulnerable are we actually to the things we love the most? Just keep this mind when you listen to your favorite song on repeat: at least you get the luxury of stopping the song.





# Miss Americana is progressive-baiting in plain sight

Written by Brianna Luna, Designed by Olivia DiMichele

Released in late January 2020, *Miss Americana* (2020) is an intimate look into the hectic life and career of singer-songwriter Taylor Swift through a compilation of interviews, iPhone footage, and live concert recordings. Netflix describes this film as a “raw and emotionally revealing” peek into Swift’s “transformational” phase in her life when she “learns to embrace her role not only as a songwriter and performer but as a woman harnessing the full power of her voice”.

**“I wanna wear pink and tell you how I feel about politics.” -*Miss Americana* (2020)**

Despite receiving overwhelming support from critics, I couldn’t help but feel personally distraught and uncomfortable by the film’s lack of awareness for its privileged narrative. Over its trajectory, it becomes very transparent that Swift’s political activism came from a place of self-interest, and from the dire need to stay relevant within her aging career as a pop star. She herself admits that the need to be relevant in modern times is crucial to sustaining careers in the music industry--and from this, she practices what she preaches. Taylor Swift’s sudden emergence within the political spectrum reveals a paradox of white feminism disguised behind a sheer veil of victimization and white privilege. I think it is incredibly important for Swift to speak up for her content and work, and I also agree that sexism is a major problem continuously faced by women in any career field. However, there’s a crucial disconnect that can only be explained through a racial and class-based divide--one that Swift has turned blind to in order to share her story on a hierarchical pedestal.

**“I guess I just think about all the people who weren't believed..or the people who were afraid to speak up because they think they won't be believed...and I just wanted to say I'm sorry to anyone who wasn't believed because I don't know what turn my life would've taken if people didn't believe me when I said something had happened to me.” -*Miss Americana* (2020)**

In explaining the origins of my feelings of discomfort, I will be focusing on key moments within the film that put privilege at the center.

Looking towards the start of the film, the story begins by Taylor narrating how she “became the person everybody else wanted [her] to be”. Sitting on the couch around what seems to be the era of the ‘*Reputation*’ album in 2017, Swift finds out that she has not been nominated for a Grammy, responding to her publicist with, “This is fine, I just need to make a better record” and, “I’m making a better record” rather passive-aggressively. I could only imagine the disappointment and invalidation that can come from information like this, but the



Looking towards the start of the film, the story begins by Taylor narrating how she “became the person everybody else wanted [her] to be”. Sitting on the couch around what seems to be the era of the ‘Reputation’ album in 2017, Swift finds out that she has not been nominated for a Grammy, responding to her publicist with, “This is fine, I just need to make a better record” and, “I’m making a better record” rather passive-aggressively. I could only imagine the disappointment and invalidation that can come from information like this, but the tone of frustration directed towards her publicist was completely unnecessary. For someone who has had not only the academy but the music industry

**“For someone who’s built their whole belief system on getting people to clap for you, the whole crowd booing is a pretty formative experience” -Miss Americana (2020)**

Swift also shows a trajectory of her political activity throughout her career, beginning at a young age explaining how people didn’t want to hear what she had to say about politics, they just wanted to hear her songs. During the 2018 midterm elections, Taylor broke her silence and encouraged democrats in Tennessee to get out and vote against a Republican senator running on self-proclaimed and contradictory “Tennessee Christian values”, defending her action by arguing “I need to be on the right side of history”. Swift openly supports LGBTQ+ rights, women’s rights, equal pay, and various other progressive issues, as portrayed throughout the film. While I do believe these views are addressing the greater needs of society, I think the reasoning behind Swift’s activism is based on political transparency trending within celebrity figures. It is no longer enough to just sing songs and stay out of politics, especially during the Trump era. The people who have social capital and legitimacy in the media are not the ones who remain quiet about social issues, they are the ones who speak up for them. For Swift, she simply can’t afford to stay out of politics because if she remains silent, her career will vanish before our very eyes. Where this was truly an act of self-interest or not, the film seems to paint it in this light unintentionally. Politics seems to be a new characteristic of interest to audiences, and with Swift’s participation, it only seems to be a task that was motivated by self-interest. Once politics started affecting her personal life and career, then she was inclined to speak up.

**“The female artists that I know of have reinvented themselves 20 times more than the male artists. They have to or else you’re out of a job. Constantly having to reinvent, constantly finding new facets of yourself that people find to be shiny...This is probably one of my last opportunities as an artist to grasp onto that kind of success.” -Miss Americana (2020)**

As a fan of Taylor Swift’s discography, I am disappointed to feel so bluntly discomforted by this film. I believe she is one of the most gifted storytellers, and it shows within her lyricism and attention to detail. However, I believe it is a civic duty to speak up against white feminism and ‘progressive-baiting’ in the media in order to address the highly potent underlying issues within the music industry based around privilege. I will never discourage speaking up on an issue, but I think if you are pursuing it with intentions of individual gain, you will never reach the mental, political and social liberation you desire--and you marginalized voices in the process.



# Isolation or Inspiration: A Selection of Albums Born From Solitude

Written by Xia Jimenez, Designed by Connor O'Shea

As those of us who are in quarantine spend our 2nd month stuck with social distancing, the EPs and singles have started to roll in. Music has always been a way to process, to stay aware, active, and become connected to others, but its possibilities become complicated when production and exhibition are done in isolation. Now, I'm not here to claim all works made in isolation are masterpieces, or even that isolation breeds creativity and productivity (a serious misconception I think we've all heard enough of by now). But isolation is a very real experience that artists deal with and here are some of my favorite albums made within it.

Willful isolation for artists is often a luxury reserved for those who haven't been forced into it. Gucci Mane's prolific career includes a couple of albums that were written and recorded partially from prison. While this might not be the complete isolation which we think about, prison is a far cry from social integration. The Burrprint 2 one of the aforementioned albums is a work with great production, ominous bass lines, and hard-hitting 808s. Some of the album was indeed recorded before Gucci went to jail, with features from Lil Kim and a sick Ludacris verse, but the intro and outro are recorded directly from the phone and have a distinctly more serious tone than most of the other songs. This album has a huge emotional and sonic range from rage to sorrow to the song Antisocial which is frankly cute. All in all Gucci Mane deals with institutional isolation by going against a minimalist or somber sound, producing something that's full, bold, and hits hard as hell.

Would talking about albums written in isolation be anything if it didn't acknowledge Ok Computer? Written in the St. Catherine's Court mansion in isolation, it epitomizes the privilege of self-isolation as well as some of its most recognizable sonic elements. Critics and Radiohead fan-hyped up as it is, Ok Computer is truly a banger of an album. With songs like Climbing Up The Walls this album has a much more isolated feeling about it than past Radiohead albums. Climbing up the Walls and The Tourist particularly seem to tap into Radiohead's more desolate and frankly depressing side. I've been listening to Climbing Up the Walls in my isolation and while it's not my feel-good anthem, the repetition of the lyrics "I'll be there" and "climbing up the walls" are both haunting and strangely comforting. While Radiohead's isolation is glaringly privileged there is something very honest about the emotional turmoil and somber nature produced by isolation that this album replicates.

Another favorite from a UK native, Mike Skinner's debut project under the pseudonym The Streets: Original Pirate Material. This album was not only produced but recorded within his apartment in the housing block that is lit up on the album cover. A series of UK-garage bangers (not anthems) this album acknowledges, even on the first track Turn The Page, Skinner's isolation and solitude in his music-making process. The playfulness of this album is refreshing and feels so personal. On tracks like Has it Come to This, there is something comical about how earnest Mike is about his life and dedication to the garage scene. This album is one of my favorites because of how funny and self-reflective it is.



Whether or not Skinner meant it, it's funny. Songs like *Don't Mug Yourself*, are so hyper British and garage that they are simultaneously extremely honest and deeply funny. *Original Pirate Material* is musically entertaining, but the most important thing imparted by Skinner's isolation is the ability to be fully himself, to be so deeply a UK garage MC, and acknowledge the more playful sides of that.

Ok, I'm beginning to stretch my idea of isolation here, but the next two albums still count. *Tape One* and *Cocoa Butter*, are the Scottish trio *Young Fathers* first release and latest album respectively. They both are based in musical isolation, *Tape One* features a large number of songs written and produced in the members' bedrooms, while *Cocoa Butter* was the product of the relative isolation of the studio that they spent ridiculously long hours to days in. Both of these projects are incredibly entrancing, both combining the unique vocals and sampling techniques that separate them from other British acts. Here, I think isolation has helped them cement stronger bonds with each other and cement the integrity of their sound. *Cocoa Sugar* is not quite the experience that *Tape One* is, though I wouldn't consider either project to be very hard listening, *Cocoa Butter* is more danceable. There is something that has rubbed off on the *Young Fathers* since the release of *Tape One* that has changed their sound, but it's still on the cool side of experimental bridging the gap between the beauty and introversion of *OK Computer* and the danceability of *Burrprint 2* while also being complicated and dark.

Isolation clearly produces a certain darkness whether it be lyrically or sonically, proving that though it can produce art, isolation is still a struggle. Music can be a source of resistance like *Burrprint 2*, an economic reality as it was for *Original Pirate Material* and *Tape One* or a contemplative methodology like for *OK Computer*. Beauty certainly comes from isolation, these are some of my all-time favorite albums! But these albums also show this disparity that isolation foregrounds. There is a world of difference between what is happening now, the isolation of *Radiohead's* mansion, and the reality and institutional force of prison. In writing this piece I found there were many more albums written and produced in chosen isolation by white artists than artists of color. I think this is in large part due to economic realities, but also the essential nature of community for people of color. Our communities are our strength, comfort, understanding and often sources of inspiration, the self is not and cannot be detached from the community, so isolation is not a very desirable situation for art production. But, the reality is that during this time music is an important part of processing and keeping people sane. So make your bedroom EP and your electronic singles and release them. Because another thing these albums prove is that isolation is devastating but never total, *Drumma Boy* produced and helped *Gucci Mane*, *Radiohead* was all together, *Mike Skinner* was helped by producers and *Young Fathers* had each other and the outside world. Isolation is a huge part of all these amazing albums but if you look hard enough you can find community support and collectivity.

## What to Make of

written by AMBER ELLERTSON  
designed by DREW KALASKY

# FATHER OF ALL MOTHERFUCKERS



In 2020

Green Day's February release, *Father of All Motherfuckers* (2020), is a tongue-in-cheek middle finger to the record industry. With almost no song exceeding three minutes in length, Green Day did the bare minimum on their last album with Warner Bros Records in order to fulfill their contract and leave. The passion and drive seen on earlier albums, such as *American Idiot* (2004), *21st Century Breakdown* (2009), and *Revolution Radio* (2016), is simply not here on this release. Now I ask, why?

*Father of All...* screams of recycled ideas mish-mashed together in a rush. The album art itself reuses the iconic hand grenade from *American Idiot* and slaps a barfing clip art unicorn on top of it. Compare this to any other album of theirs and the differences in effort are striking. On every other album Green Day has released, they always went out of their way to ensure the album art sends a message related to the content of the music: *21st Century Breakdown's* album art of a couple kissing in the midst of warfare (two characters which are introduced within the music, might I add) communicates love and hope, but *Father of All...*'s cover art sends a message of laziness and immaturity, which is definitely also seen within the content and nature of the music on the album.

Let's look back at Green Day's thirty year career — yes, thirty years. Being Oakland natives, their impact on the punk scene of the Bay Area was monumental, and their 90's albums, *Kerplunk* (1991), *Dookie* (1994), *Nimrod* (1997), and *Insomniac* (1995) cemented their place as icons of rock during this time. It was through these albums, specifically *Dookie*, that they were able to drive the Bay Area punk scene to become as influential to America's youth as it was, and also help them become household names. The success they attained through *Dookie* propelled them to become headliners, and they rode off this success over future years to create one of their most famous albums, *American Idiot*—an album that sold over 16 million copies worldwide, has its own Broadway musical, went 6x Platinum in the US, and has a film adaptation.





Green Day's reach and influence over millions of people and several generations is something to behold, so it is only logical that one would expect the best of the best from a band of such a caliber, right?

That is subjective. The main reason for their success has been their unending ability to push the envelope when it comes to creativity and break social norms. However, their creative sparks are not always approved of by the general public (which is to be expected). In 2012, they ambitiously released a trilogy of albums within the span of a few months, and many fans saw the lack of effort within each album's songs as them simply relying on the gimmick of quantity over quality to turn a profit. This same idea of forgoing well-written songs for reaching the bare minimum of what they set out to do is exactly what is seen on *Father of All Motherfuckers*.

Green Day likes to mess around with their audience, and people in general, so it is no surprise that this recent release has exactly enough songs to be considered a full length album, is the last album they needed to crank out in order to be freed from their contract, and that everything on the album itself screams of irony. Recycled art, seven of the ten songs being under three minutes, and the majority of the singles being poppy, radio-mixed tunes ready to be monetized all point to the fact that this album is a joke. They have released this to poke fun at the record industry and make a statement, which is what they are known for, and it would be doing them and their rich history of breaking the mold an injustice to take this album as anything other than a political statement. *Father of All Motherfuckers* should serve as a reminder to not take ourselves too seriously and to always question the rules that preside over us in all situations, across all circumstances, and in every scenario in which a unicorn is involved—especially if it means going out of your comfort zone and trying something new.



# Feral For Real: An Interview

Written By Stanley Quiros, Designed by Connor O'Shea

Kelsey Ferrell, or "Feral," a member of UC Berkeley's very own Songwriting at Berkeley, is a bona fide artist with much to say, in her debut album, *Trauma Portfolio* (2018), and a lot more coming in both song and stand up comedy. She has just come off of winning the title of the Daily Cal's Best Local Artist for 2020. This is an interview with one of Berkeley's most original songwriters.

Q: How long have you been playing music? Did you start with lessons or are you self-taught?

A: I've been writing songs for as long as I can remember. When I was in preschool I used to stand in the corner and sing songs I made up on the spot instead of going and playing with the other kids. When I was 10, my parents finally let me take guitar lessons after a few attempts at piano lessons failed. I took guitar lessons for many years growing up in Santa Cruz and started putting my words to music between 5th grade and 9th grade. Around 9th grade I started getting really self conscious- none of my friends wrote songs and I felt embarrassed of my work. So I stopped writing songs for the rest of high school.

That worked, for a time.

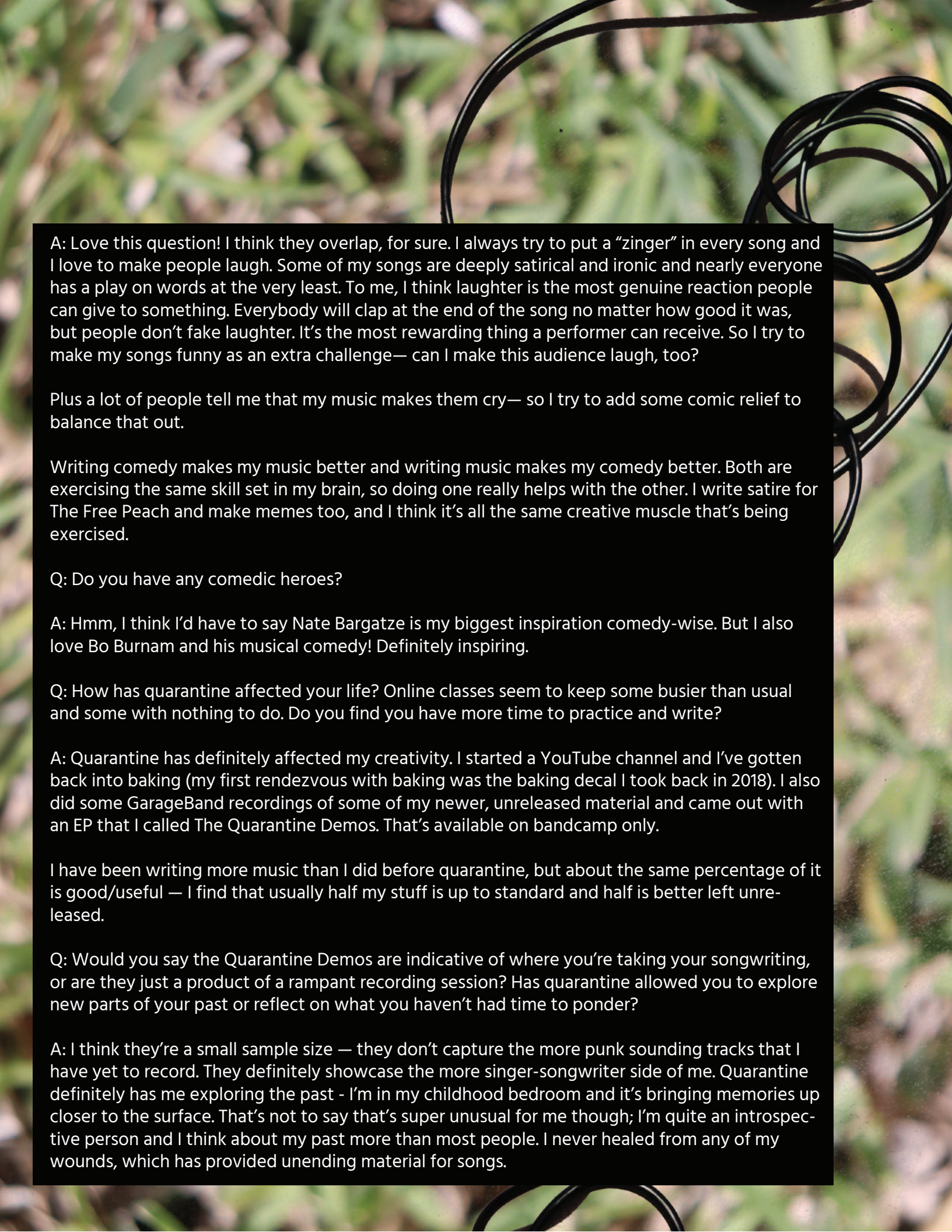
But when I started freshman year at Berkeley, I was completely broken as a person. I had just had a completely brutal breakup and I was more lost than I'd ever been. So first semester of freshman year, I saw songwriting at Berkeley on Sproul and I grabbed a flier. I didn't go to the meetings right away. I just kept the flier on my bulletin board, hoping I'd be brave enough to make it to a meeting one day.

Finally my second semester I summoned up my courage and went to a meeting, where I met a group of people just like me- who loved to write original music. I was shy at first, just performing covers and not being super proud of anything I'd written.

By the time sophomore year came around, I gave myself a rule: for the year, I wouldn't play any songs unless I had written them myself. This self-imposed sentence pushed me to create more than I ever envisioned for myself. But after sophomore year, I suddenly had enough songs for an album!

So that summer, after being encouraged by a friend who knew a producer, I started recording in Santa Cruz at The Loud House with Ian Pillsbury— an amazing producer who brought my music to the next level. We recorded and eventually *Trauma Portfolio* came out in October 2018.

Q: You've performed stand up comedy at open mics alongside your songs. To you, are both of these part of the same set or two separate artistic ventures?



A: Love this question! I think they overlap, for sure. I always try to put a “zinger” in every song and I love to make people laugh. Some of my songs are deeply satirical and ironic and nearly everyone has a play on words at the very least. To me, I think laughter is the most genuine reaction people can give to something. Everybody will clap at the end of the song no matter how good it was, but people don’t fake laughter. It’s the most rewarding thing a performer can receive. So I try to make my songs funny as an extra challenge— can I make this audience laugh, too?

Plus a lot of people tell me that my music makes them cry— so I try to add some comic relief to balance that out.

Writing comedy makes my music better and writing music makes my comedy better. Both are exercising the same skill set in my brain, so doing one really helps with the other. I write satire for The Free Peach and make memes too, and I think it’s all the same creative muscle that’s being exercised.

Q: Do you have any comedic heroes?

A: Hmm, I think I’d have to say Nate Bargatze is my biggest inspiration comedy-wise. But I also love Bo Burnam and his musical comedy! Definitely inspiring.

Q: How has quarantine affected your life? Online classes seem to keep some busier than usual and some with nothing to do. Do you find you have more time to practice and write?

A: Quarantine has definitely affected my creativity. I started a YouTube channel and I’ve gotten back into baking (my first rendezvous with baking was the baking decal I took back in 2018). I also did some GarageBand recordings of some of my newer, unreleased material and came out with an EP that I called The Quarantine Demos. That’s available on bandcamp only.

I have been writing more music than I did before quarantine, but about the same percentage of it is good/useful — I find that usually half my stuff is up to standard and half is better left unreleased.

Q: Would you say the Quarantine Demos are indicative of where you’re taking your songwriting, or are they just a product of a rampant recording session? Has quarantine allowed you to explore new parts of your past or reflect on what you haven’t had time to ponder?

A: I think they’re a small sample size — they don’t capture the more punk sounding tracks that I have yet to record. They definitely showcase the more singer-songwriter side of me. Quarantine definitely has me exploring the past - I’m in my childhood bedroom and it’s bringing memories up closer to the surface. That’s not to say that’s super unusual for me though; I’m quite an introspective person and I think about my past more than most people. I never healed from any of my wounds, which has provided unending material for songs.



Q: Often artists treat their music like their children. Do you have a favorite, or a couple few that don't get old? On the other end, are there songs that have fallen out of rotation?

A: There's definitely some I avoid playing, like the more punk tracks because they sound so sparse without percussion. Others I avoid playing because I feel like they need more context to be understood and I usually don't have time to go into all the backstories- like "Soup" that's about being bullied in high school for reporting a pedophile but it's such a long story that I rarely play the song.

I think generally my favorite songs are the ones that have best encapsulated feelings I previously was unable to articulate. Then once I found my words, it brought me a certain peace. So personal favorites from the album would be "Guest House" and "Lonely Planet." All time favorite is "Native Speaker," and you can hear the demo on the Quarantine Demos.

Q: Are these songs still works in progress or are you moving on to others still in the oven?

A: I think the songs on The Quarantine Demos are 100% done lyrically, but I have a lot of work to do production wise to take them to the next level. But that won't happen until the next time I hit the studio. I've moved on to write more new material and that's my current focus. I won't tweak The Quarantine Demos songs until I'm actually recording in the studio again, and then I highly doubt I'll change the lyrics.

Q: Any words of wisdom or inspiration to those would-be songwriters now relieved of any excuse not to pick up their guitar and strum?

A: What I say to anyone thinking about writing songs is to go for it because you're the expert. You're the expert on your own life and your own experiences. No one is better equipped to write a song about your experiences than you. If people kind of realized that and got a little confidence from it I think we'd have a lot more songwriters!

Feral is only getting started, and as her senior year is interrupted by the ongoing pandemic, her last answer should be a battle cry to the "I would if I had the time" kind of music dabbler. This unfortunate situation has already provoked a response from the music community, and hopefully they will continue to shed light on a darkened world. As our interviewee says with a touch of humor and a bit of grace, let's not be such "lonely planets."



# Match Made in Heaven: How Spotify on Tinder Reveals the True You

written by PALOMA MACIAS

designed by NATALIE KEMPER

Cell phones have integrally woven themselves into the tapestry of the twenty-first century. As a staple of modernity, the iPhone has been at the forefront of this technical revolution. According to a 2007 Apple press release, one of the crucial apps offered within one of the first iPhones' in its widespread distribution was: the music app. From the iPod to the iPhone music has been a long time accompaniment in the world of Apple. The two are inseparable, but, the form of our music consumption is not homogeneous to singularly Apple Music. Simultaneously with the invention of iPhones in 2008 was the worldwide distribution of a new streaming service and competitor: Spotify. With the introduction of cell phones in daily life, people have the ability to carry their music collection with them everywhere they go. Music can curate the sonic atmosphere through which we traverse. It has the ability to uplift and inversely upset, as each song in our collection connects to an expression of one's self from varying positionalities in our lives. If music is established as an artistic medium that expresses us, it would seem vital in the pursuit of our biological need for romantic partnership.





Thus, Tinder comes into play; from its release in 2012, it has only gained popularity. In 2016 a great match was made between Spotify and Tinder: users now have access to the music preferences of their potential romantic interests. This does not mean that every potential match has access to those 2013 bops, the music you listen to “ironically,” or the occasionally embarrassing simp songs. Instead, users pick their Tinder “anthem,” one song they choose from Spotify that represents themselves. This choice, based on interviews with matches, can be a strategic move to convey some niche musical taste ie: something in the Dungeon Synth family like “Dreams” by Depressive Silence. Or, your match may attempt to be funny and have “Goofy Goober Rock” from The Spongebob Squarepants motion picture (2004, Hillenburg, Osborne). What I found surprising was that there were not that many sexually explicit songs used for anthems. One match had in their bio: dtf? (down to fuck?) yet also, “Wonderwall” by Oasis for their anthem. What does this say about modern love?

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Hey! Is Wonderwall your favorite song?

For this particular case study, this person (let’s call them Sam) had intentions to sexually relieve themselves and were looking for another person to satisfy this need swiftly, but, they still sought some semblance of authenticity. When I messaged Sam to inquire about their song choice the conversation went as follows:

Hey! Is Wonderwall your favorite song? -P  
Sam: ya when r u free

Their horniness aside, they admitted to choosing a song that was their favorite. Even when their existence on this platform is not indicative of seeking a long lasting connection, Sam maintained a connection to their identity as a “real” person when not on the app. Someone who outside the app possibly blasts “Wonderwall” as a pick me up or is always pleased to hear that song in shuffle. The music Sam chose connects them to an entire life unbeknownst to what the bio alone would represent. This disconnect between what we put online and who we are behind the screen is a phenomenon found in every aspect of social media. The person we are while face to face is even a performance of sorts, thus, online is no different. Tinder gives people the platform to perform themselves under the pretense that there is a possibility for one-time hookups, long term relationships, friendships, conversations, and if nothing else a virtual ego boost. I do not think that these songs alone would make someone match with another person since the app is based on how someone looks in their collection of photos but it could be an added bonus. Since you first meet them online it is their music that speaks for them as their voice until you meet in person.

Sam

ya when r u free

# IDDLES AND mental health

written by NATALIE GOTT  
designed by NATALIE KEMPER



We may have all experienced a time when a song unexpectedly melted you to the floor or flooded you with butterflies. It's simultaneously beautiful and daunting. Music has a nature of grappling with Music goes into the bellies of our souls to pull out what we could not have

faced alone. It has the ability to tap into every emotion, through its endless sub genres and playlists for every feeling. It's simultaneously beautiful and daunting. When we feel unnerved in foreign times or emotions, music attaches a melody to our feelings as if to almost be a message of solidarity. In doing so, a community is crafted.

Punk has risen to this standard time again with its profound commentary on depression. Both explicitly and implicitly, punk bands have risen to the challenge of using their music as a platform to divulge the hardships of depression. Black Flag made this apparent with their song "Nothing Left Inside," just as did IDLES with "1049 Gotho," as well as Suicidal Tendencies with "Suicidal Failure." Punk is inherently a genre gilded by a facade of masculinity and tough nature. Through its spitting, cursing, and kicking, it's violently breaking down stigmas surrounding mental health, welcoming its listeners into a space of support.

There's a luring appeal to easily sulk into these emotions, until the burden becomes too heavy to bear. Then it becomes like quicksand—the more you struggle, the more you sink. Punk attaches lyrics to the feelings we don't have the courage to tap into alone. It melts feelings down until they become something moldable. Songs like these force you to stare directly into the eyes of whatever you're avoiding.

Los Angeles band, Beach Bum's did just that when they seamlessly grasped the bravery of discussing such a topic repeatedly throughout their album, *I Want to Sleep Forever* (2018). The first track, "Take the Light Away" is a statement that may be too painfully familiar for some to listen through. It falls short of only two minutes, yet it takes that time to stare into the face of exactly what it feels to slip into a lightless state that its simplicity, through lulling vocals with the raw sound of scratching guitar strings, parallels the lack of spirit that couples depression. The last track on the album, "I Want to Sleep Forever" goes into the grim of discovering a friend who has slipped into a similar state. It wrestles with the stark pain of witnessing a friend fall into a spiral of self-destruction so deep it ultimately claims their life.

On stage, Beach Bums's lead singer and producer, Jonathan Horsley, regularly thrashes and screams shirtless to match the energy of all those moshing before him. In his midst of his chaos, his lyrics still manage to shamelessly bleed into such fragile topics, unveiling an incredibly vulnerable element of their music.



LETTER

FROM

THE

**2020** has seen the entire world grind to a social stop. For creatives, 2020 has been a tense time as we struggle to find inspiration and variety in the confines of our home. It seems safe to say, 2020 has been ridiculously strange, and some may venture to call it “unprecedented.”

When the Covid-19 pandemic and hysteria wears off, our relationship to music will most likely be greatly altered. How? Only time can tell. Perhaps there will be too much new music we will be unable to properly digest it. Maybe our tastes will have shifted as we found new artists and albums to fall in love with. Hopefully, we will be more grateful for music and its healing properties. When we all return to our favorite venues or pass a local busker, maybe we all will be more grateful as our livelihood has returned and we can feel extremely grateful for our roots.

Despite the changing world, the passion and love felt for music by The B-Side community has never died or wavered. Instead, I have seen many of us turning to music as a source of comfort. Although we were unable to meet in person for the better half of our semester together, our staff has worked incredibly hard to keep creating content.

To say I am proud is an understatement. Working alongside such incredible leaders, journalists, photographers, designers, and musicians is nothing short of inspiring. Serving as Editor in Chief has been such an amazing privilege, and working with you all to create a new form of storytelling is one of my favorite things I’ve been part of during my time at Cal.

Issue VIII is dedicated to the incredible Spring 2020 staff. Since 2013, we have grown exponentially from a dozen writers into a growling hungry beast of over 60 staffers. We wouldn’t be the magazine we are today without our staff, it’s their vulnerability and collective energy that allows us to produce and move forward as an organization. This issue belongs to each and every one of you.

With love,

**(Mak)aila Heifner**  
Editor in Chief, Spring 2020

EDITOR

