



ISSUE ONE | 2016  
THE B-SIDE MAGAZINE

## STAFF

We are The B-Side, U.C. Berkeley's student-run and produced music magazine, offering music coverage, thought, and appreciation in the Bay Area and beyond. A huge thanks to everyone who had a hand in our inaugural first issue. Keep rocking with us.

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**Matt Sater**  
Staff writer

Greta Kline wishes she'd written "Good Intentions Paving Company" by Joanna Newsom. Greta Kline says that Eminem's "Stan" is the greatest song of all time. Greta Kline is Frankie Cosmos, and Greta Kline is a better songwriter than you are.

If you haven't heard of Kline or Frankie Cosmos, her appeal can best be explained by Frankie Cosmos fans. I asked a few friends of mine for their favorite Frankie Cosmos song lyrics, and each immediately had multiple songs in mind. There were no overlaps between any of their answers, and none of their answers matched my favorite of her lyrics: "Haven't you heard / If you can't pinpoint the schmuck in the room, it's you", from 2014's "Schmuck in the Room". The range of responses is partially due to the sheer amount of material — Greta Kline has released over 40 albums since 2011 — but also an effect of how personal her music feels to everyone who listens to it.

This year's excellent *Next Thing* was the second full-length Frankie Cosmos album recorded in a studio, following 2014's *Zentropy*, and the first released

via the Bayonet Records imprint. The shift from homemade song sketches to fully fleshed out studio arrangements hasn't fazed Kline in the slightest. "[It] Would be cool if it was possible to record music and make it sound really nice in a studio and have it be full band, but also be really comfortable and naked in my bed at the same time," she wrote in an e-mail, shortly after returning

from an extensive European tour. "Someday." The layered nature of Frankie Cosmos's releases is a uniquely rewarding experience for her fans. Longtime listeners — or new ones who've done their research — can recognize many elements of older Frankie Cosmos songs revisited and re-recorded for the new studio albums. Kline confirmed that her music is still evolving even while on tour: "I've spent up to a few years tweaking and changing these songs. I'm still making changes to the ways we play certain songs from *Next Thing* live."

With her steady increase in popularity and her continued aptitude for writing heart-stopping lyrics, her tour stops have become more and more like

group singalongs. "I wish I could remember the first time [the audience sang with me]," she said, "but it still feels totally shocking and cool when that happens."

In Frankie Cosmos songs, it's often the small details that hit home and make the songs instantly memorable. "On the Lips", a song originally released in 2013, opens with the lyric "I watch David Blaine / and find

myself believing / in many things."

The wit and depth of this one-liner is

typical of Kline's songwriting, and this line in particular even caught the attention of magician David Blaine himself, who quietly tweeted the event link to Frankie Cosmos's show (although he didn't make an appearance). Kline doesn't know how Blaine heard about her lyrics about him, but refers me to the people behind "David Blaine's The Steakhouse", a cheekily named DIY venue in Brooklyn. "You'll have to ask the DBTS crew about their name — but I can tell you that Cameron from DBTS is who got me into watching a bunch of David Blaine videos."

Frankie Cosmos, whether defined as a band or as Kline's solo

project, has far progressed past its humble home-recorded beginnings. It's very much a touring band now, as evidenced by multiple references on *Next Thing* to tours, vans and rest stops (where Kline said her go-to snack to pick up is the very sensible choice of "Bugles and water"). This sense of perpetual motion is reinforced by the album art: an illustration of a highway sign next to a nondescript field, as viewed through a passenger-side window.

Discussing the high points of touring, Kline said that "One of the most memorable venues we have played at was Meow Wolf," referencing the Santa Fe venue/art installation. The venue's unique design approximates the Lost Boys village from Hook, if the Lost Boys had access to an ungodly amount of in glow-in-the-dark paint and bought a great PA system.

At first, this neon fantasyland of a venue seems an odd fit for Greta Kline's understated sound. But there's something about the earnestness of Meow Wolf's presentation, its childlike wonder, that does seem to mesh perfectly with aching sincerity that pervades all things Frankie Cosmos. "It's a really amazing installation," she remarked. "You get lost in it, and it's beautiful."



# For whom the festival rolls

Huber Rodriguez  
Staff writer

I stood in a crowd of about 20,000, waiting for the man who might very well go down as the best rapper of all time. Earlier that day, I had previously been harangued into seeing The Chainsmokers, and their brand of pandering, pedestrian EDM-pop had been too much to bear sober, so I left to stake out a spot for Kendrick Lamar. As the crowd rapidly surrounded the Samsung Stage, I found myself in one of many classic festival conundrums: unable to reach my friends near the front and unwilling to compromise my position to watch with another group near the back. My company for the show thus became a pair of vacationing Alaskan fishermen tripping on acid given to them by 'some guy near the merch tent'.

Kendrick's latest studio album, *To Pimp a Butterfly* (2015), was a landmark political manifesto on blackness in America. But as he walked into his well-earned headlining set that night at Austin City Limits the fans going ballistic and singing along to classics like "Swimming Pools" and "Alright" were predominately white and Asian. The recipients of Kendrick's live message that day, as he rapped about taking pride in blackness, were hardly black — an irony that extends further still when taking into account that the author of this piece is a 23-year-old privileged, white grad student from New Jersey.

In a way, the stark difference between the characters in Kendrick's music and those in attendance at his shows is representative of the festival experience as a whole. In an age when emerging indie bands play upwards of 30 festivals a year, every American city is cashing in, creating a world in which both hardcore and passive music fans alike can see dozens of their favorite acts each summer without committing to dozens of concerts. And each year, organizers get better at curating their festival experience

to the whims of their primary demographic: rich, white kids between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five. If Pitchfork, the preeminent tastemaker in purportedly independent music despite being recently bought by publication giant Conde Nast, says Father John Misty, Vince Staples, and Solange

Knowles are making poignant political

statements within the context of excellent music (which indeed they are), you can bet white, informed, and liberal millennials will be soon be wholeheartedly singing along at a festival near you.

All the hallmarks of 2010s zeitgeist culture can be found at a 2016 festival, glitzed up and on display like some kind of indie Las Vegas. The increasing social acceptance and legalization of marijuana, as well as the emergence of MDMA and LSD as relatively common commodities (especially in proximity to live music) has placed drugs at the forefront of festival culture. Decisions such as which EDM artist to roll for (Kygo on Friday or Porter Robinson on Saturday?) and how to sneak joints and spliffs past security

have become familiar elements of the full time job that is attending a 3-day music festival. Local craft brews will fly off the tap for nine dollars a pop. Recycled, organic and heavily branded packaging will be strewn throughout the grounds.

Voter registration booths will be manned; iPads with Square Cash will reap Visa swipes from within dozens of artisan food trucks; and festival-specific phone apps will be downloaded, checked incessantly, and later uninstalled by every smart-phone touting millennial from high school fangirls to thirty-something stoner bros uniting for the modern world's best reinterpretation of a classical Roman orgy.

In this way, festivals provide a means by which individuals can physically inhabit a hall of mirrors that reflects the familiar culture we constantly witness through our screens on the internet. At Austin City Limits Fest, Kendrick Lamar

is no longer a foreign entity to be viewed and interacted with only through videos, tweets, articles, and shares. Instead, he's a real-life person — one who incites twenty-four year old Alaskan fishermen to squeal like children. And with his physical presence comes the commoditization of his music and his message. Where in the 1960s experiencing protest music was an infectious and spontaneous consequence of living through the the times that were a changin', it can now be packaged and sold for 300 bucks a pop, with the added bonus of watching emotional high schoolers lose their shit to Twenty-One Pilots while stoned out of your fucking mind.

And who can afford that 300 dollar price tag? Probably not Compton teenagers struggling to resist gang culture, but guys like me, that are afforded not only the luxury of going to the show, but also of criticizing everyone else that does too. That doesn't mean I'm going to stop attending festivals, and hopefully I'll still enjoy them. But it's important to recognize that the price of seeing every wannabe Mumford and Sons or Tame Impala that your friend starred on Spotify is immersing yourself in a world where everyone looks like you, reads what you read, likes what you like, and hates Trump. Festivals are far from inclusive, and the more they cater to my (and Berkeley's) demographic, the more insulated their attendees become from the cultural waves this amazing year in music is creating. We all want the same thing: a break from work and school in the form of pure hedonism, with psychedelic blinders to shield us from the overwhelming, racially-charged political shit show that is 2016. But hey, I screamed every word of "King Kunta", so I'm not the problem.









# An open letter to Obama: Check yo'self

Natalie Silver  
Staff writer

I do not have a shrine in my room. But is my wall — plastered with a poster of the much younger, much hotter, and much more stoned version of this nation's president — a place of casual worship?

Absolutely.

Yes — I love Barack Obama. His face is the last thing I see before the lights go off every night, and that hazy black and white image of a genius thriving in his college days is sometimes the only thing that motivates me to get out of bed in the morning. It's safe to say I felt like I knew him — until today.

When I was mindlessly scrolling through Pitchfork this afternoon, I came across a headline that confused me: "Obama Discusses His Favorite Rappers: Chance, Kendrick, Kanye, Drake, Jay Z."

Okay wait, hold up. Barack. My dude, my guy, my role model: I respect the shit out of you, but sometimes you make it a little harder than it has to be. Your suuuuuuper vanilla list that screams "Hey Malia, name five uncontroversial hip-hop artists who you also think are hot," left me cringing and begging one very serious question: WHERE. THE. FUCK. IS. ICE CUBE?

He started this gangster shit, and this is the muthafuckin thanks he gets? Let's back up.

Obama has proven to be absolutely woke in terms of pop culture — specifically sports and music. In 2013, he picked Cal over Stanford in men's hoops to reach the NCAA Final Four (which neither team ultimately accomplished, FML) and in the same interview where he was wrong in his rapper rankings, he switched gears and picked the Warriors to win the NBA championship this

next season. Even though any intelligent person looking at the Dubs' Starting Five — which includes Kevin Durant and Steph Curry, two of the best players in the country — could predict the team's probable success, it still serves as proof that our president was not delusional and/or high when he spoke to SiriusXM's Sway in October — which only further fuels my confusion around his flawed ranking of still-alive rappers.

And his music taste has been equally on point. According to WOLB Talk four years ago, he ranked The Rolling Stones' "Gimme Shelter" #4 on his Top 10 songs on his iPod, which, as you all know, sent me to Enlightenment at Desert Trip this October. His wedding song was Stevie Wonder's "You and I"; he's known and loved Chance The Rapper since he was eight years old. And his 2016 Summer Playlist featured songs from queens of R&B, including Mary J. Blige, Aretha Franklin, and Billie Holiday. I assumed that all people intelligent enough to lead a nation were also boring enough to have zero taste, the thrill factor peaking at maybe one of Frank Sinatra's more upbeat songs. But damn, Barack. Respect.

We get it, Mr. President.



NO  
ICE,  
PLEASE

You're obviously not George W. Bush...or Donald Trump...or even Hillary Clinton — who is using Rachel Platten's "Fight Song" as her campaign song (the use of a textbook, bubblegum pop song strikes me as shockingly anti-feminist, but I digress).

Obama. Sir. Please hear me out. In spirit, you are a gangster rapper. When 2Pac famously rapped, "We ain't ready to see a black president," in his 1998 work of genius, "Changes", he was begging the universe for you to come along.

I love and respect you deeply. So when you told SiriusXM's Sway that your favorite current rappers are Chance, Kendrick Lamar, Kanye West, Drake and Jay-Z (who you proceeded to preface with the title "King"), my entire faith in your leadership, morality, and most of all, intelligence, was thrown into question.

One of the men who spearheaded the genre of gangster rap, the mastermind lyricist who once rhymed "taxidermist" with "thermos" (see "Pushin' Weight", *War & Peace Volume 1: The War*

Disc) and wrote an entire song about how he will never have sex with white women ("Do I wanna fuck, not hardly / That's kind of like Barbie fucking Bob Marley" — my favorite line from "Cave Bitch"), and a Founding Father of the this-is-not-fucking-okay attitude — Ice Cube is undeniably brilliant. His voice presents listeners with an incredibly potent formula of politics, rage and comedy. His lyrics rage with the simultaneous tenacity of Muhammad Ali (in and out of the ring) and the eloquence of Albus Dumbledore. His songs have defined gangster rap and used the medium to respect institutionalized oppression and racialized violence in America, specifically in the hood.

So, in this October 28 interview with SiriusXM's Sway, when Obama forgot Ice Cube's name but remembered Drake's, I couldn't just let it be.

Stay woke, Obama. But next time you say Jay-Z is King...well, you better check yo self.

\*\*Writer's note: I also love Jay-Z. I promise.\*\*



## THE B-SIDE

Aziz Yehia  
Staff writer

(For Monkfish)

Zoom in on John Medeski, hunched over keyboard, deep in it.

His lower lip is bouncing like a jackhammer. That is, if jackhammers could match the rhythm of popcorn, popping. He's mouthing his notes — atonal, sporadic, yet rolling — and his keyboard cries the cry we'd hear if lasers and bubbles could have a baby: piercing with a prickly zing, yet frothing with a rounder liquidity. Picture a bubblebath out of control: foam rising and cascading over the tub's walls, pop-popping all the way, lathering the cold tile floor. Superimpose a vein-bulging Skerik and a dehydrated, laboring Adam Deitch.

Saxophonist Skerik is throwing his weight front-to-back, to and fro, in periodic arcing undulations across two yards or so. With every oscillation, saxophone howls swell — matching his movement's menace, surge, and gut. Amplifiers groan impressions of breath — his every exhale's corporeality magnified, not masked, by apocalyptic effect pedals. Then, from the back, a human surprise: Adam Deitch stands up, abandoning the beat. He (desperately) reaches back-stage for a 12oz plastic water bottle and, turning to face the crowd, crushes the whole thing in one voracious chug. Without hype, he places the empty bottle — precisely, with surprisingly agile professionalism — aside the kit and, without further ado, dives in. What what? Whose bubblebath? Weird description, I know — but DRKWAV ("Darkwave"), too, is a weird experience. If that's not what you want from your music, reading, or life, run now.

The show's first 5 minutes met rolling eyes and dubious expressions. Some friends ran. Perhaps Skerik's demon/alien voice-modulator shtick seemed hokey and contrived; perhaps all that dissonant space-noise was just too weird or confusing. But, by 30 minutes, doubters' silences were roars as the crowd howled for Skerik's every wackazoid utterance.

This skeptic-to-convert lag time can be partially explained by the set's unusually patient plotline. DRKWAV may be the side project of three funk all-stars, but this ambitious supergroup didn't break into full dance party until well into the show's second half. Until then, we wandered a maze of "cinematic" Eraserhead-hallway soundscapes: murky, dissonant, impressively-designed, unsettling and painfully lingering. One such moment cut especially deep:

The beat is dead. Raw high-voltage hemorrhages tear across the open spaces. They writhe, they snowball, they squeeze, squirm, and howl. Then, from within, a human surprise: natural piano. At first — like a far, dim streetlight on a dark night — Medeski hardly exists beneath the veil. But as tides slowly subside, slow-moving chords take form in the depths: somber, repetitive, soft, still — blue. So wistful, yet so true.

I will not attempt to describe John Medeski's face. I will say that I saw my mortality in the mirror, felt the tenderness and depth within every individual so inaccessibly alone in the universe and, somehow, with a softening in my chest, nodded and exhaled some kind of humbling bitter-sweet acceptance.

Completely subjective and over-the-top, I know. But, catching my doubter friend's eyes, they glistened, wet. And, looking back at Medeski — that face I can't describe — his musical and spiritual depth was clear as day. Only later would I discover Medeski cross-legged aside Tisziji Muñoz (a spiritual guru first and... how should I say... a very special guitarist second) on the album cover of their 2013 collaboration *Beauty as Beauty*. But I'd already raved about this blue moment all weekend. DRKWAV stayed with me — beyond gnarled technologies and virtuosity — because it channeled tangible spirit; not quite Tisziji, but in resonance. Meanwhile, through the gullies and trenches, Deitch steadily ran metric, churning grooves — ranging from experimental future-jazz to nebulous big beats. For instrumentalists like my newly-made Afro-Cuban percussionist friend

and myself, Deitch's creativity, skill, flow and dialogue dropped jaws — that is, until mouths twisted into what Bay Area folks would call a textbook "thizz face." As for my newly-made-aspiring-rapper friend, one of Deitch's early grooves inspired a spontaneous minute of cypher — along with some heavy chest bobbing, cries of enthusiasm, and a video.

"That's that kind of shit I was talking about! That's the kind of shit I hear in my head!"

Yet Deitch held a fundamentally disorienting character. Maneuvering shifty nudges and displaced backbeats, he shaped irregular phrasing and propelled an expansive, long-haul energetic trajectory. Imagine descending, slowly slowly, into a bottomless mine shaft — securely harnessed to a dangling rope — steadily realizing that, behind the pitch black, this void is just a little more spacious, just a little more gaping, more horrifying.

Somewhat like a slow, meditative, free-time alap raga introduction (though with far different notes), DRKWAV cut us down to point-size — to nothingness — taking the time necessary to ferment our individual, judging states into a common compost. And from this fertile, flexible spaciousness, we grew.

Essayists too, in their own way, often mobilize a similar plotline — beginning with a disorienting deconstruction of assumptions and, from this malleable base, constructing significant ideas.

DRKWAV certainly constructed something significant, but they were far less didactic than I. They didn't push clear-cut messages or morals aside from, perhaps, alien-Skerik's "without darkness there is no light... without daaarknessss, there is noo liiiight." But this truism, that life is more than just sunshine and flow-ers, was more of a loose thematic frame than any sort of "argument" — which was fortunate, considering these deep clichés are so pointless in abstraction and so significant in experience. So, rather, they lived it onstage. Their deep jam was a real-time musicians' saga — complete with the inwardly complex character

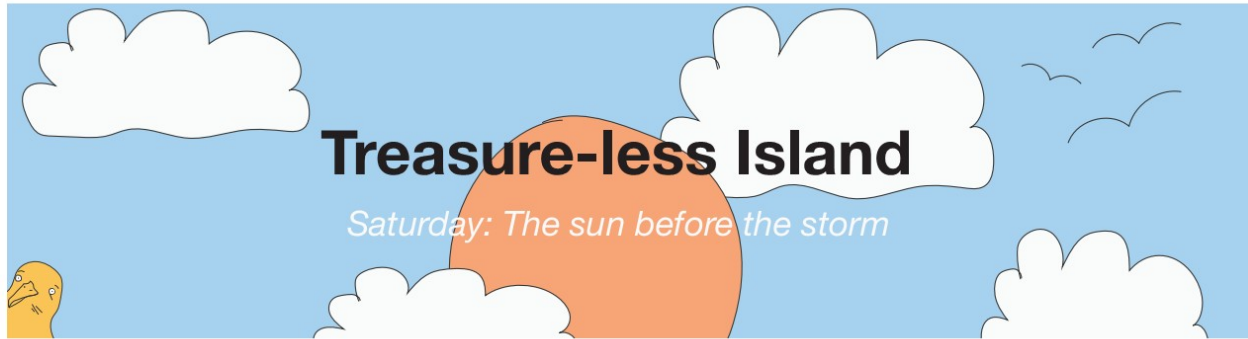
development of great novels, films and life-stories.

While we all have complex inner worlds, honing the more-than-musical ability to dig, channel and express those depths through "jam" is — like psychoanalysis — a lifelong practice. DRKWAV's members have cultivated an inspiring degree of jam mastery and, therein, human complexity flowed.

They anguished, sank in depression, stirred and, eventually — come dance-time — found in themselves far more than some shimmering spin polished in the practice room. Those who call DRKWAV's spacious depressions "self-indulgent" or "boring" fail to appreciate their plotline as a human psycho/physical/spiritual process — without which the dance party couldn't have been what it was.

They crushed. Deitch cranked out some absolute filth — the kind of grease that listeners of Lettuce, his powerhouse funk band, know so dearly. Well, Lettuce plus an extra dose of seriously-box-breaking imaginative virtuosity — be it an afro-beat inspired double-time hustle, a blast-off Latin-funk fusion bouncer, or a deep-sitting odd-time pocket (that both felt organic and arrived in wild places). It was time for Medeski to bust out his signature funky B-Hammond organ that, though his expansive musical identity has far transcended his groove-man reputation, is always a tasty, tasty treat. And Skerik, when not honking repetitively nuanced syncopation schemes, stepped into his jammy prime — ripping full-bodied yet nimble (and harmonically accessible) solo lines that seared and soared, lifting the dance floor into funky revelation. Until, ultimately and inevitably, a human surprise.

Skerik reached out to the earthlings — arm extended, palm open — and spoke. His last word posed a question — not in the word itself but, rather, in voice inflection. Starting low, he modulated high: "gooO." Then, wriggling back earthwards: "Oood." And, then, finally, as if unsure of himself, he meandered off, upward and into the ether: "niiiiilGHHT??"



**Nathaniel Wartzman**  
Staff writer

Treasure Island 2016 greeted me at breakneck speed: with forty-mph winds, an almost-cancelled Young Thug set, and — less fortunately — pneumonia from partying in the pouring rain.

Hosted by Noise Pop and Another Planet Entertainment, this year's celebration served as Treasure Island's 10 year anniversary of the annual two-day celebration, as well its last run on its trademark man-made Treasure Island (the festival announced its move to a new East Bay location late this September).

Despite the ominous forecast, I looked forward to attending for its intimate setting and — surprisingly — the rain. For a festival of its size, it was incredibly rare that Treasure Island ran only two stages. The small-scale setup would lead to a lack of overlapping showtimes — a huge benefit for a festival hosting such well-known artists — and, subsequently, no stressful decisions.

I also expectantly anticipated the rain. It would obviously be wet and cold, but, since I'd never attended a music festival in a downpour, I figured I might as well embrace the erratic Bay Area weather.

I arrived early to my first set of the day to ensure I could make it to the very front. The sun hid behind a blanket of gray sky and blinding clouds. The Bay Bridge stood still and clear in

the distance to the right of the main stage. The air was cool, the ground was muddy, and the vibes were good. That's when I heard the drums.

Mura Masa, the 19-year-old English producer and DJ took the stage, accompanied by London-based singer bonzai. And the duo absolutely killed it — turning the performance into a big dance party. The bass hit hard, the synths were funky, and bonzai's vocals sounded amazing. They played all their most popular songs including "Firefly", "Love-sick", and "Lotus Eater" — also giving the audience some new, unreleased tracks. The performance was a great mix of upbeat dancing and groovy soul.

As the set drew to a close, the sun started to peek through the clouds. And I was left out of breath more hyped than ever for the next act — rapper Young Thug.

But ten minutes before Young Thug was supposed to come on, I began to feel a drizzle. The brief moment of sun didn't last long. Prepared for the wet, I pulled on the hood of my waterproof North Face jacket, only to realize it wouldn't do much shortly after, as the light drizzle turned into a steady pour. My friends and I quickly got soaked, but the rain's momentum only added to the leftover energy from Mura Masa's previous set. Despite the downpour, everyone in the crowd stayed rooted in place, gazes fixated on the stage. All eyes

awaited the arrival of Young Thug. Ten minutes turned into thirty, and the crowd grew antsy even though our spirits remained high.

And that's when we heard "Antidote" by Travis Scott. The crowd went crazy; an array of variegated ponchos blurred together as everyone began to mosh. To maintain the crowd's energy, the DJ played some more hip-hop hits: Kanye West's "Father Stretch My Hands Pt. 1" and A\$AP Rocky's "Lord Pretty Flacko Jodye 2" among them.

Then, all of a sudden, the music stopped. Silence engulfed the stage as the crowd dispersed into scattered chatter. More time passed. A short, white man wearing a Treasure Island hat and makeshift poncho — which better resembled a plastic bag — came on stage.

"Young Thug is running late and should be here by 5:30," he promised — supposedly playing a show a whole hour after he was supposed to come on. The pouring continued. We had already been waiting a while, and our level of soaked was now bordering on discomfort but sure, why not. We could wait an hour.

"Antidote" by Travis Scott played three more times. Close to three hours passed. Kamaiyah, an Oakland rapper who played a set in the early afternoon, even gave a second, impromptu performance, doing her best to lift our spirits in the heavy weather.

No formal announcement was made to present Kamaiyah, and,

as she came on stage, I could hear people asking if she was Young Thug. No, not Young Thug, I thought to myself. But dope all the same. No equipment decorated the stage. Most of the set boomed, recorded, through the speakers. And yet, the Oakland native — sporting a lime-green poncho, big clear sunglasses streaked by rain, and surrounded by countless hypemen — found a way to cater to her home turf and create a big dance party in the rain. I hope she got paid double for her efforts — she certainly deserved it.

But after such a long wait the crowd began to grow a little annoyed — and more than a little soaked to the bone. The excitement around dancing in the rain had turned into fear about contracting pneumonia by the time Young Thug actually made it to the stage. And when he finally did, his DJ yelled at everyone in the audience for not "turning up enough," something that didn't go over very well with the patient, drenched crowd.

Even though the rapper played many of his old hit singles including "Stoner", "Power", and "Best Friend", it was almost impossible to revive the hype the crowd had two hours earlier. Tired, soaked, and a bit letdown, I left Treasure Island before knowing whether other artists like Zhu and Ice Cube would even play later in the night, only to find that, in the end, they did.









**Conner Smith**  
*Design lead*

I arrived at the swampy festival grounds Sunday afternoon, just after the rain had passed. Following several apologies by Noise Pop for the chaos of Saturday, and many promises of improvement, I slugged through fields of standing water towards the main stage for a mellow performance by Mac Demarco. The Canadian singer-songwriter had the crowd gently moving, rather than rambunctiously participating, to avoid splattering mud on their neighbors to hits like "Salad Days" and "Chamber of Reflection."

The gray gloom put a damper on the afternoon. And all the fleeting sunshine and Michael Jackson-inspired antics of Neon Indian frontman Alan Palomo couldn't sell the poorly-mixed sound and group's goofy, all-white attire. Tantalized by a preview of the visuals to come, I left early in hopes of a change in pace with Tycho.

The Bay Area veteran applied almost-full live instrumentation to semi-electronic tracks, dragging us out of the day's doldrums with a visual and auditory experience that proved to be the highlight of the day. Within range of Sylvan Esso on the far stage, I decided to listen to their characteristically stellar set while fortifying my position on the guardrail in anticipation of James Blake.

Shortly after, however, the darkness returned. And so did the rain.

I watched with excitement — and later, concern — as the stage hands begin carting off equipment they had set up offstage. After several prolonged moments, an announcement came on the stage screens. Blake's set would be an hour delayed due to high winds. We waited.

After an indefinite amount of time, another announcement appeared, reiterating that the show was delayed but that Tycho would perform a surprise DJ set in the interim — a replay of the exact same incident that occurred with Young Thug a day earlier. Twenty-or-so minutes after the delay time, an announcement on the festival Facebook page appeared. The show had been cancelled due to weather. It took organizers still another fifteen minutes of uncertainty before they posted the announcement on the stage.

Noting that the wind and rain were visibly less intense than earlier, I decided to ask some stagehands and security guards what was happening, only to receive mixed reports. Some cited equipment failure due to rainy conditions; others cited scheduling conflicts due to the delays. A brief investigation into several comments made by Duke Dumont regarding Saturday's cancellation revealed misman-

agement and unsafe equipment configuration. Yet what was painfully clear was the flagrant misadvertisement of Treasure Island as "rain or shine" — and a serious lack of communication on the part of the organizers. Defeated by an exhausting wait for James Blake and hesitant to trust promises that Purity Ring and Sigur Ros would still perform, we decided to cut our losses and head home.

Unsurprisingly, this debacle generated a fair amount of controversy that remains unsolved. A seemingly insensitive note from Another Planet Entertainment vice president Allen Scott only fanned the flames. Eager to salvage what was left of their reputation, the organizers issued a formal apology and a conciliatory James Blake concert at the Fox Theater Monday night, free for all festival ticket holders. The line wrapped around the block of the venue, and the interior filled quickly with the murmur of thousands of weekend warriors who decided to push through and witness their rightful reward.

And a reward it was indeed.

James Blake captured our souls like a messianic savior. His show was spectacular, featuring minimalistic live lighting, and a set that oscillated between thunderous electronic anthems to tender, heartrending ballads. 2016's *The Color in Anything* featured heavily, with the title track framed by a

burning, glowing comet tracing shapes on a dark screen behind the stage. Blake masterfully built "Retrograde", live, growing it from a mere suggestion into the gripping vocal loop. Flashes of dull red light exploded in a blazing white and orange supernova as the chorus dropped.

Humble to a fault, Blake reiterated his shock at the amount of people who had lined the block waiting for the show and how "unusual for us", it was. After rounding out a soaring rendition of Joni Mitchell's "A Case of You", Blake obtained total silence from a reluctant audience in order to build "Measurements", a looped track that required live recording. After layering harmonies in a sonorous and deeply spiritual hymn, he departed the stage in the darkness, without goodbye, as we all stumbled numbly into the streets.

As we left James Blake, we were almost relieved that Treasure Island had cancelled the show, and that Blake was able to ascend to his full, illuminated glory in a private show. While the fault for the weekend's missteps can not be fully attributed to any one source, we should continue to be critical of the way art is shared with the public and cherish the heavenly moments of genuine exchange that graced the Fox Theater that Monday night.







George Green  
Staff writer

A coin sits on a hospital-grey album sleeve. What to do? Anyone that has had the fleeting anxiety when thumbing through a couple of fresh scratch cards knows. Like a chisel or a paintbrush, this coin is a tool. The coin scrapes along the sleeve, and metallic filings are ripped from their host – revealing beneath a photograph from Chilean photographer and artist, Alfredo Jaar. Crackling of the vinyl blends with the crackling of the album's very first track, "Killing Time", in which we are introduced to *Sirens* through a gentle, simple piano melody. The melody gathers momentum then recedes, gathers momentum then recedes. The ideas of "building time" and "killing time" already offer an insight into the metaphysical depths that Jaar will take us to. Lines such as: "We are just waiting for the old folks to die" tarnish this noir album — a bleakness that persists until the final song. It is a bleakness that really isn't to be associated with electronic music. Jaar has done something clever here, demonstrating his maturity as an artist; he has broken an artistic boundary.

Nicolas Jaar's *Sirens* is all about these boundaries: The boundary between the grey, scratch-card cover and his father's photograph; the boundary between the physical vinyl crackle and the crackle of "Killing Time"; the boundary between languages, between philosophy and art, and between art and politics. The list is extensive.

Supposedly, a press release names this album his most "politically-minded record to date", and that sounds like a peculiar description of an electronic music album. Listen, however, to the lyrics of "The Governor": "Decide... Deic...Decide. Simple and numb, stuck on automatic" are the opening lines of the jazz-infused track with interspersed sections of growling monotonous bass. Around a quarter of the way into this track, Jaar plays with boundaries again. His vocals swap with the bass as it becomes more animated and his voice repeats in familiar baritone "on automatic dial, on automatic...". One gets the sense of walking into a labyrinthine trap Jaar has elaborately created for us and, as we meet the halfway mark in the song, a scratching, impassioned horn leads us deeper into some dark hypnosis. Energetic drums teem just below the surface, before it all peters out at around 6 minutes and 40 seconds.

It is with this colour and texture that Jaar commands the space around the listener. Even in the slower and more minimal tracks of the album, "Leaves" and "No", Jaar fills the air with a weight of trepidation ("Leaves") or desperation ("No"). Jaar's music on *Sirens* is even describable in terms of Fregean philosophy. There is some sense that the music elicits in the listener a feeling of anxiety or of carefree days (the recordings of conversation with his father as a child exemplify this gloriously). But, what exactly Jaar refers to in his cryptic, and questionably intelligible, lyrics, is difficult to know. The fact that

some of the lyrics are in Spanish and some are in English fans the flames of confusion as you try to make sense of the Spanish in terms of the English. Did he sing "A pasar" ("No") or "out of sight"?

Perhaps the most politically charged track of all, "Three Sides of Nazareth", is also the most haunting. With the lines "I found my broken bones by the side of the road" on eerie, monotonous repeat, and the same bass from "The Governor" rearing an uglier head, this track seems all too familiar. Three and a half minutes in, the drums are drawn out and padded with some sort of choral vocals. And almost without our knowing, Jaar has pulled us from a shamanistic beat into a euphoric chorus — the collective voices seeming to repeat a small section of Barbor's "Adagio for Strings" — before we hear something resembling white noise, with sparse piano notes overlaid. A little too predictably, Jaar reintroduces that bass. And, again somewhat predictably, "I found my broken bones by the side of the road" heralds the reintroduction of the drums. An insignificant noir soundtrack sees "Three Sides of Nazareth" fade to its conclusion underneath Jaar's fragile soprano: "of all that he knew".

It is at this point in the album that I began to question whether this should be remembered as art, or as propaganda. Jaar clearly wants us to question the political systems we have in place. With the continual Chilean-Spanish dialogues, he seems to draw our attention to Chile's Pinochet days (the leader stepped down the year Jaar was born, following

a 56% vote for his sixteen-and-a-half year reign to end). And, certainly, such a prompt to question the powers that be could not have come at a better time for Americans. But, it is at this point in the album that I begin to feel concern that it is too ambiguous for propaganda and too predictable (towards the end) for art.

"History Lesson" changes that. It turns out that art and propaganda are not mutually exclusive. The completely unexpected Doo-wop style, with a return to Jaar's uneasy soprano, immediately engages. "Chapter 1: We fucked up": Jaar begins to recount a history lesson that, as we progress through the song, we realise is a narrative of two histories. "Chapter 5: We lied. Chapter 6: We're done" marks an end that not only summarizes the history of political systems, but also succinctly reviews the messages in Jaar's own songs on *Sirens* — the history of his own album. "Chapter 6: We're done" is simply a reflexive statement before the end of the song. Except it isn't the end. Throw everything I said about predictability out of the window. What happens for the last minute is almost indescribable — it is as if Jaar has plucked sounds and noises and waves of energy from the very atmosphere. With them, he creates a room of emotion, completely overwhelming the listener. And this is his grand ending — the final great boundary to break: that between art and observer.

## Jack Garratt on debut album, non-genre specificity, and Chance the Rapper



*Myra Faroqui*  
Managing publisher

Jack Garratt has effectively proven to the world that he is a jack of all trades (pun sincerely unintended), but more impressively — a master of it all. The British multi-instrumentalist is currently on tour promoting his debut album, *Phase* (2016), which features the hit song “Worry”, originally introduced in his first EP, *Remnants* (2014). After a phone conversation with Jack, I arrived at a few conclusions, which helped me better understand his artistic motivations, objectives as a performer, and personal philosophies.

I don’t know what to call Jack’s music, and neither does he: that’s the point. Citing muses David Bowie, Stevie Wonder, and Paul Simon, Jack Garratt also refused to categorically delimit his own sound. He instead emphasized the importance of creating music that feels right and honest — a creative venture that knows no boundaries, transcending genres and reductionist music dictionary labels.

Curious as to whether or not other artists are ever actually told to pigeonhole themselves, he was never explicitly told to

do so, and so he simply never did. Jack claimed he “was never good at sticking to one thing,” a characteristic made even more apparent by his stage performance, in which he alone sings and plays the piano, drums, and guitar. Growing up, he has always possessed an inexplicable knack for doing it all. From self-writing to self-producing and self-performing, Jack is a distinguished, professional musical multi-tasker.

*Phase* is the most honest representation of who Jack Garratt is. Confident in what he has produced and grateful for the label to which he is signed, Jack was still reluctant to call his debut album as belonging to solely him — or to the label for that matter. He genuinely — albeit, incongruently — decreed that the record “is mine, but also not mine.” I sensed an authentic degree of modesty laced in his voice when he discussed *Phase*, as it starkly contrasts the old stuff he used to write and perform in the past. To him, his old music was comparatively more disingenuous: aiming to please audiences at the expense of his own personal and artistic integrity. He has since learned to be proud of what he puts out, and so *Phase* was born. So what draws the blurry

line between arrogance and self-confidence? Jack reminded himself that “it could all disappear as quickly as it seemed to come together. Being a musician is something I’ve been working on since I was a kid, I’ve only been professionally doing it, I guess, [for] the past few years.”

Jack Garratt is proud of what he has produced and pinpoints the same feeling in the performances of other artists for whom he greatly respects. Referencing Chance the Rapper’s performance on *Ellen*, Jack praised Chance’s performance and overall artistry as absolutely honest and individual, and never “in spite of the music industry” or “in spite of a label.” Jack glorified Chance’s performance etiquette and self-written songs to indicate how important it is for a person to simply “be proud of what you do,” no matter what that thing is. At 24, Jack Garratt has already achieved that feeling via a truly “honest and representative” album he can confidently call his first — a feeling with which he hopes everyone becomes acquainted in his or her own respect.

Jack Garratt recognized the audience as the “leader of the show.” The one-man-band even went so far as to call himself “the

least important person” in a given venue. Laughing off the ostensible irony to this statement, he imagined, “if I went in thinking I was the most important person, then it would be equally as much of a shit show if I didn’t show up at all.”

And so it was after this declaration that I came to learn that one of Jack’s most integral keys to success — professionally and otherwise — is humility.

Humility serves as a performance enhancer in that Jack remembers for whom he is there to entertain — and then does that all too well with everything he’s got. He treats a show like a unique opportunity to cultivate any experience he wants. Where his songs and records are immortalized by the way in which they were finalized in the studio, each live show is an outstandingly matchless event, after which he hopes the audience will be just as tired and satisfied as he is.

Through his passion, honesty, and groundedness, it’s clear that Jack Garratt isn’t necessary difficult to understand. Yet, to get to know him a little better, simply listening to his self-representative, debut album, *Phase*, might help us learn what represents him best.



## Warhol: The great grandfather of punk?

Emilie Dylewski  
Editor

It may very well be that Andy Warhol, pop art extraordinaire, lit the spark that began the punk rock movement.

Controversial as it may be to pinpoint the birth of punk, a genre typically defined by its nature to color outside the lines, Warhol may be — at the very least — the great-grandfather of punk.

*Let's get there together: a simplified lineage of punk*

The Velvet Underground (key players: Lou Reed, vocals/guitar; John Cale, keyboard/bass/organ/viola; Sterling Morrison, guitar; Maureen Tucker, percussion) came together in New York City in the '60s, alongside acts that evolved out of the fading rock and roll scene of the '50s, such as rock and roll rebels, the Rolling Stones who wanted to break the seasoned mold of rock and roll while holding fast to its bluesy roots.

Young twenty-somethings who saw music differently, The Velvet Underground parted ways from even the rebellious and created a new image for the way they saw music. In 1965, Warhol was introduced to the band. All

about image and staying in the spotlight, Warhol immediately became their manager, and they were introduced to the world of Warhol: his Factory, his alluring fame, and all the people he brought into it.

The Factory was Warhol's studio, a literal art factory in the heart of New York City, churning out his silkscreens, artwork and a never ending cycle of celebrity. The artistic haven was covered from baseboard to ceiling, in tin foil and silver paint, with mirrors scattered along all the walls. Guests such as model and socialite Edie Sedgwick and Brigid Berlin (of the Hearst media mogul family) would stay hours if not days, amped on speed and subject to the spontaneous whims of Warhol. In their first appearance at the Factory, The Velvet Underground were introduced to the art "it crowd" of Manhattan as a new vision of music.

German vocalist Nico became a Factory regular, as Warhol and frequent collaborator Paul Morrissey insisted on Nico taking over the place of Lou Reed as vocalist. From the start, Reed was not on board with Nico's involvement. Frustrated, Reed purposefully went out of his way to show aggression towards Nico and in total, only wrote three songs for her. Regardless, in 1966, The

Velvet Underground and Nico became a mainstay in Warhol's show, the Exploding Plastic Inevitable, which brought together all forms of art: music, dance, film, even light, into one multimedia spectacular.

With Warhol as producer, their debut album *The Velvet Underground & Nico* (1967) was released. Due to an unfortunately timed lawsuit involving the unauthorized use of an image located on the album's back cover, the release date was pushed back and the album was ultimately financially unsuccessful. Shortly after, the relationship between The Velvet Underground and Warhol fizzled out due to the stress the financial strain had on the relationship between Reed and Warhol.

Warhol's influence, however, stretched beyond his time as manager. While the band came into its own sound under new management with Reed back as front man, Andy Warhol catapulted a mismatched group of little-known musicians into the connected music scene of New York.

The Velvet Underground continued touring and producing new music into the '70s, but even towards their end, the band, by most accounts, was not truly a punk band. Lou Reed left in 1970, his last performance captured by a member of Warhol's inner-circle, Brigid Berlin, at the Warhol-frequented Max's Kansas City. The recording *Live at Max's Kansas City* was released the

next year.

Max's Kansas City, with a backroom constantly flowing with posh associates of Warhol, resurfaces in music history over the next few years as a hotspot of activity. The venue featured performances from up-and-coming bands such as punk precursors New York Dolls, who were undoubtedly influenced by their local legends, Velvet Underground.

The artist-friendly Max's Kansas City, however, was not frequented by everyone. Located far from the posh surroundings of Warhol's factory, CBGB was an affordable venue that brought together new bands and fans without regard for connections, creating an accessible space with accessible sounds. With the help of CBGB, the Ramones, under the influence of the New York Dolls, saw the beginning of a punk scene in New York. In this grass-roots way, the new style of music came from the street, up.

The very culture that Andy Warhol encouraged provided the perfect grounds for a counter-culture of experimentation to thrive. These venues, frequented by Warhol, The Velvet Underground, their contemporaries, and the culture they allowed became the birthplace of punk.

By 1975, with the Ramones and Sex Pistols, high-energy, head-banging, and mosh-inducing sets became all the rage. Punk — and all its under-three-minute-song glory — was officially in.



Photos by Sameul Jameson



# Spitting Softly in 2016: How 'JEFFERY' Shook Hip-Hop's Landscape

Adil Siddiquee  
Staff writer

Overheard in the backseat of my car last month:

"JEFFERY is the hardest shit in existence, man — Young Thug makes 21 Savage look like a five year-old."

"What? Dude, he's wearing a wedding dress on the cover."

"That's the thing — he's so unafraid of not being seen as hard, it wraps back around and makes him hard as fuck."

Rap music, since its inception, has pushed forth masculinity and braggadocio as defining attributes of an artist's authenticity. The past decades have mandated that establishing oneself among other aspiring artists requires a portfolio of dominance — comprised usually of being the least afraid to die, disregarding the most females, and acquiring the most currency. Entire discographies revolve around hedonism and self-indulgence; rappers name themselves after guns and base their image on violent crime, all to make sure everyone around them is aware that they are "hard".

And all the above begs the question: With one of the biggest rappers in the game crossdressing on his album cover and countless pop/trap hybrids receiving widespread acclaim across the board, does being "hard" even matter in 2016?

## Expansion

Through the '90s and 2000s, mainstream hip-hop teemed with felonious activity — a celebration of extravagance and short, luxurious lives. Lyrics rife with homophobia and misogyny, demeaning those who did not fill the roles hip-hop expected, resulted in a landscape unwelcome to those attempting to work against the grain.

Mos Def and Talib Kweli's iconic, conscious rap was still rooted in conventional hip-hop boastfulness. Eminem's comedic, self-hating debut broke ground

for new blood that veered away from hip-hop's traditional subject matter — but was still about murder, about how he didn't "give a fuck". Despite how diverse the genre grew through the '90s and early '00s, the airwaves were still wrought with the gunshots and sirens gangster rap had long before established.

In 2004, however, a young (yet already lauded) producer on Roc-A-Fella Records released his debut album as a rapper. With high-pitched R&B samples and gospel choirs, heartfelt personal anecdotes, and a teddy bear mascot, Kanye West released *The College Dropout*.

In an era where rappers based their image off their chain size and teardrop tattoos, *Dropout* fell into another camp entirely. Kanye pushed forth the image of a "regular person" in place of the apex, predator-esque character most upcoming rappers wished to encompass. The material steered clear of drugs and homicide; instead, it focused on self-consciousness, sexuality, and feelings of inadequacy — something that, in contrast to so many records before it, previously had no place in hip-hop.

*Dropout* paved the way for future efforts to remove the previously established tenants of rap music. Lupe Fiasco's triple-entendre-riddled nerd rap scaled the charts by targeting students and the socially conscious. Kid Cudi's reserved, synth-heavy hip-hop appealed to the introverted suburban stoner — and many others, evidently. And this new generation of "soft" rappers was huge, selling out stadiums to an audience that gangster rap had never known.

## Pushing The Envelope

*The College Dropout* was certainly not the first to abandon the standards of mainstream hip-hop, but it was definitely a leader in catapulting an unorthodox sound to the top of the charts. Through

albums of the same ilk, a shift towards social progressivism, and the Internet, alternative sounds became the face of hip-hop. A\$AP Rocky's "pretty," fashion-minded persona captured a young, female-inclusive audience, as did Childish Gambino's Tumblr chick-directed, meme-riddled rap music.

Clearly, by the time Chance the Rapper was whining to college girls and Danny Brown was rocking straightened hair, the shift in sounds and image from the hardcore gangster era was complete.

Hip-hop was no longer dominated by the image that artists like NWA and 50 Cent propagated. The importance of being "hard" had largely diminished.

Through 2012 and 2013, Drake and Nicki Minaj continued their reigns as the biggest — and least abrasive — rappers on the charts. Kendrick Lamar's bombastic hardcore hip-hop gave a nod to gangster rap, while addressing the toxic and shallow pitfalls associated with the genre. Countless other artists forged new paths, not adhering to a single, genre-defining sound.

Yet the following years raised the bar even higher — from the aggressive, poverty-stricken depths of trap music, a surge of upbeat and colorful new blood emerged.

Seemingly all at once, 2015 and 2016 ushered in a handful of artists with a flagrant disregard for hip-hop image standards. Lil Yachty's *Lil Boat mixtape* collected a cult following for the sail-or-themed, mumbling 18-year-old sporting colored dreads — the same 18 year old who topped the charts in a collaboration with the overwhelmingly positive D.R.A.M. in "Broccoli". Similarly, D.R.A.M., having garnered a considerable fanbase for tracks like "Cha Cha" and "Cute" proves every bit as delicate as the archetypical hip-hop persona is calloused, yet

receives airplay equal to Gucci Mane or Juicy J.

Yet what really cements 2016 as the year hip-hop changed is Young Thug's most audacious contribution to the genre today — his mixtape, *JEFFERY*, the most recent installment of the eccentric pop-trap style for which the rapper is known. *JEFFERY*, which features album art of Young Thug wearing a wedding dress, received critical acclaim, as well as a long, consistent stint of radio play. For an artist so unconcerned with upholding traditionally masculine identity to be so universally celebrated is a remarkable landmark in hip-hop history.

Twenty years ago, there was no way Thugger could get away with saying 'there is no such thing as gender' without being demonized and discarded as a serious rap artist. Twenty years ago, DMX could bark "I show no love/to homo thugs" and go platinum. Twenty years ago, hip-hop was about aggressiveness and detachment.

Today, it's about showing just how much you care.

What was once called being "hard" has, to an extent, become replaced by the desire to be "real" and sensitive, to express vulnerability and openness. Contrasting the cold and unsympathetic displays of hostility with modern-day barefaced positivity speaks volumes about how hip-hop has evolved, and how it's grown into the deep and diverse genre of music it is today.

My friend unplugs my phone and plugs in his.

"Thugger! I roll me one, smoke to the face!" rings out from the car stereo.

"Honestly, that does make him sound hella hard. I'm pretty sure you'd never catch 21 Savage in a dress."

"That's cuz he's afraid, man. Young Thug isn't afraid of anything."



# 5 sentimental indie things to get you over that pseudo-something

Vivian Chen  
Staff writer

## 1. The “that was a bad relationship anyways”:

“Don’t Wanna Be Your Girl” - Wet (*Don’t You*, 2016)

This indie classic is the one you blast when you’re finally done with your significant other’s shit — because who doesn’t reach that point eventually? They don’t treat you right; you’re better off without them; you honestly just “don’t wanna be [their] girl” anymore. (Sending these lyrics in a text as a break-up method is not recommended, but does get points for pure savagery.)

## 2. The “some-day you’ll find someone that appreciates you”:

“Baby Blue” - King Krule (*6 Feet Beneath the Moon*, 2013)

Ah, the unrequited love. Let Archy Marshall’s guitar reverb and deep, smooth voice lull you into a warm embrace of anguished empathy as he croons about the “baby blue” that didn’t love him back. Shout along as he sings, “Girl I could’ve been someone to you,” because you totally could’ve

been, if only they gave you the chance. But don’t worry too much. Eventually, you’ll find the one who appreciates the brilliance that is you. The one who actually deserves you “painting the skies blue” for.

## 3. The “remember the good times, but it’s over now so move on”:

“Some Things Last A Long Time” - Beach House (*Devotion*, 2008)

Okay, so maybe your relationship wasn’t toxic or one-sided. Maybe it was (actually) a good relationship, with great memories. But sadly, it’s over now. Reminiscing is all well and good, but it ended for a reason. Never forget the strings of unanswered texts near the end, the emotional/physical

## 4. The “I’m tired of hookup culture”:

“Lover’s Spit” - Broken Social Scene (*You Forgot It In People*, 2002)

If you’re into hookup culture, that’s great, more power to you. For those of you that are tired of it, Canadian indie dream collection Broken Social Scene is right there with you. It’s time to stop “swallowing words while giving head”, ignoring what you really want and settling for what’s easy (and meaningless) to get. It’s alright to want more. It’s not alright to pretend what you have is more than it is — or to pretend that you’re ok with having less than you want. As Kevin Drew defeatedly puts it, “You know it’s time that we grow old and do some shit”.

## 5. The “you deserve whatever relationship you want”:

“Water Me” - FKA Twigs (*EP2*, 2013)

Maybe you thought your transient nothing could be more, but it never got there. You’re not alone. FKA Twigs leaves us a reminder that it’s totally fine to be “stuck with” yourself, and that if your significant other thinks what you want in a relationship is a “fee”, you didn’t need them anyways. Remember, what you felt and what you wanted were real to you, and were therefore valid. Ultimately, don’t forget that the only one that most deserves and needs your love is you. No one else compares. (Except maybe Twigs.)



