**Summer 2015**

1. The Last Internationale **Life, Liberty, And the Pursuit of Indian Blood**

Let’s start (with) a revolution. In one of the odder writing tasks I’ve found myself involved in, I’ve just done a new translation of The Marseilleise. As a result I discover that The Marseilleise is a *really* bloodthirsty song. As I suppose it should be, having been written by revolutionaries to gear themselves up for overthrowing the King and to strike terror into their enemies. Now, if, as one day soon we must, we forcefully overthrow the *ancien régime* of George Osborne, Iain Duncan Smith et al., I humbly propose that we all sing this song ‘Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Indian Blood’ as we rampage through the streets. George Osborne’s got a very guillotinable look about him, hasn’t he? Sort of snooty French aristocrat. So easy to imagine him in a wig and a tumbril. I can barely conceive of a more exciting song than this. The Last Internationale appear to be a revolutionary communist rock band. Fancy! The vocal, the shouts, God those drums. And just when it looks like it might be heading off into some muso-wank in the third minute, they pull it back and the song gets even more thrilling. The fact that the lead singer, Delila Paz, sounds, at least early on, like PJ Harvey only adds to the joy. In fact, can you conceive of a more exciting revolution than one in which we rampage through the streets with Delila Paz and PJ Harvey at the head singing this song? I can’t.

1. Eagles of Death Metal **Miss Alissa**

Scientists estimate that in late 2005, 67% of all music in the world was produced as part of a Queens of the Stone Age side project. Eagles of Death Metal are another, Josh Homme collaborating with an old school friend. God I love this. It’s a bit of skittering Southern R’n’B whose purposefully lo-fi speeded-up drums and plastic one-take guitars combined with the absurd falsetto create a song full of itchy hilarity. I’m loving the bit between the first two verses where the drummer demands the chance to take a rest then shouts drums as he resumes his work in the second verse. I can’t imagine being in a bad enough mood for this not to cheer me up.

1. The Broken Family Band **Ship Full of Drugs**

I’ve come late to TBFB, who manage to create some pretty convincing Americana, despite the disadvantage of coming from Cambridge, England, rather than Austin, Texas. This (uncharacteristic) propulsive number reminds me of The Waco Brothers, a shit-kicking description of a druggie causing lethal havoc around him, despite his delusional insistence that he can turn this ship around.

1. Lloyd Cole **Women’s Studies**

The recent box-set of Lloyd Cole & The Commotions’ entire recorded output plus extras sent me back to Lloyd Cole’s solo stuff. I listened to a lot of Lloyd Cole & The Commotions when I was a student, which, let’s face it, was the ideal condition in which to listen to those first three albums. This song, from a recent-ish, album could be a Commotions outtake, full of student and literary references. But it’s also classic solo Cole, perpetually lecherous, protected by his intellectual armour, lingering over the ‘women that I am not married to’. The sturdy arrangement and the ‘You Won’t See Me’ ooh-la-las give the song weight and lightness respectively.

1. The Breeders **German Studies**

This is from that little-noticed post-post-drugs-hell fourth Breeders album, a strange – but I find insanely catchy – song, in German, with a peculiar kind of oompah-band backing being played on the guitars. As ever with Kim and Kelley Deal, the cheerful melody is complicated by subtly dischordances and the sisters’ ethereally gnarled vocal tones.

1. Arctic Monkeys **Don’t Sit Down ’Cause I’ve Moved Your Chair**

Every time this comes on, I spent the first seconds pleasurably anticipating hearing Teenage Fanclub’s ‘Sparky’s Dream’, but this then turns into a bewilderingly menacing comedy song with a big fat guitar attack grinding away through it.

1. Foxygen **No Destruction**

Obviously this is a Dylan homage/piss-take. The verse sounds like a take on ‘Desolation Row’ with the little vocal curl down from ‘The Drifter’s Escape’ and a line like ‘You don’t have to be an asshole / You’re not in Brooklyn any more’ is clearly from the world of ‘Positively 4th Street’. I find myself vaguely embarrassed by the ‘doors of consciousness’ section, if I don’t remember to persuade myself that it’s a piss-take. This was a single a couple of years ago but their last two albums are fun (tinged with the slight sense that the singer might be about to do himself a mischief).

1. Graham Nash **Military Madness**

He’s had quite the career, hasn’t he, Graham Nash? I can’t think of many lives in pop music I’d have preferred. His bandmate David Crosby had a pretty good one too, but I wouldn’t want his life outside pop music. I think David Crosby plays on this, along with Jerry Garcia and Neil Young. They were certainly all over *Songs for Beginners*, the album that this song opens. This is a jauntily earnest anti-war song. With a bit of effort, it can be made to cohere as a statement. The melody is what makes it but I like the move from youth to age, UK to US, political to personal.

1. The Submarines **You, Me and the Bourgeoisie**

The Submarines have a very cute getting-together story; after a first attempt to form a band, the boy-girl couple at its core split up but when each heard the new songs the other was writing, they realised that they both wanted to get back together. So they did, recording a few songs and the first album was mastered for them as a wedding present. I’m not sure if this is meant to be satirical in its liberal hand-wringing about global inequality and suggestion that only love can bring peace of mind. I really hope so.

1. Wolf Gang **The King and All of His Men**

Remember that point in the late 2000s when David Guetta and Calvin Harris were chucking these cheap-sounding over-cranked keyboard washes over everything widely spaced in the stereo mix to create a euphoric dance sound? Yes you do, don’t lie. It was inevitable that indie would get a piece of that action and this sounds to me like it. I know nothing whatever about Wolf Gang. Literally zero. But they sound British. Are they? Yes, just googled and they are/were. This song builds up expertly to create a sense of exultant euphoria, breaking into a swirling synth riff. It’s basically a C21 indie ‘Final Countdown’ and no worse for that.

1. Kevin is Gay **Giant Drag**

Giant Sand always sound like they have this wild freedom on record. All the more amazing because their lead singer, Annie Hardy, has struggled with medical problems and addictions for over a decade. This song is all double-tracking and attack and there’s a wall of sound feel to it. I presume the song is about drugs (‘365 750[mgs?]’) but I wouldn’t swear to it. I fucking love the meowing.

1. Superchunk **My Gap Feels Weird**

Fuck, the adrenalin that pumps through this is amazing, the little dialogue of guitars that drives the song through. The lymrics are intriguing. Is the ‘gap’ the (generation) gap the singer feels between him and the ‘kids down on the corner’? Or is this a song from the point of view of that generation, a generation with a weird gap in their hearts, an alienation from the guys who will never understand them? The end is great and reminds me of Roland Barthes’s brilliant skewering in ‘Blind and Dumb Criticism’ of that cultural pose of pretending not to understand ideas that threaten you. He says, you may not understand Marxism, but Marxism understands you’. Superchunk say, ‘Time and transition is a wave that will put you overboard / Where the darkness is a bed and you can sleep / Till someone tells you that they know you and they do’.

1. Wiley **Wot Do U Call It?**

A classic from the very early years of Grime, in fact so early that the question of the title can’t be answered with the word ‘Grime’ as ‘Grime’ doesn’t seem to have been invented yet. Instead Wiley mocks the promoters and A&R men who both want to ill-fit him into the categories of two-step, urban and garage. It’s a great example of everything I loved about Grime; the broad range of the sampling (the opening is powered by a strange little wooden-soldier woodwind hook) and the inventiveness of the rhythms and rhymes (I love how he springs from ‘ready to say my goodbyes’ into kissing off everyone who doesn’t believe in him, the rhythm clattering then straightening out). And the whole thing is pulled together by Wiley’s mocking self-confidence.

1. Teddybears STHLM **Cobrastyle**

This I came across from an Apple Music playlist. It’s a RIDICULOUSLY catchy pop/rock/reggae mash-up and to be honest it’s on here because it makes me laugh - not in a mocking way. It just seems so preposterously eclectic and jolly. They’re a Swedish fusion anti-rock band. Aren’t we all, in a sense?

1. Sonny J **I’m So Heavy**

This is genuinely funny. They’ve taken a Neil Hamburger prank call and then created a musical environment for it that is both inside and outside the character’s head: heavy but preposterous, bubblegum rock. Gets funnier each time I hear it, in fact. It’s kind of worth tracking down the original to see just how brilliantly and wittily they’ve edited and arranged this.

1. The Shins **September**

What do you think of this? I think the melody and arrangement is rather exquisite. My only hesitation is that the trope of a guy thanking a woman for forgiving his flaws because she knows he’s really just a child is a bit of a blokey cliché, but it’s such a lovely song with a rather McCartneyesque vertical melody.

1. Temples **Keep In the Dark** (Live)

This is one of a number of home-recording bands on this playlist. Well, actually, I’ve no idea where this was recorded, but this started as a home recording project and then when they got signed to Heavenly, they had to form as a band so they could go on tour. I’ve chosen the live version because it just feels a bit crunchier than the album version – and it’s a great recording too.

1. Royal Blood **Come On Over**

The thing I love about Royal Blood is that they make a fucking racket. Keeping with the QOTSA thread of this compilation, this feels to me like an outtake from *Songs for the Deaf*. The chugging and rebounding riff demands to be played at ear-splitting volume.

1. Richard Thompson **Dad’s Gonna Kill Me**

When I was a kid I really wanted to be able to play guitar like Chet Atkins. How weird is that? I reconciled with the fact I will never be able to play guitar as well as pretty much anybody, though it would be amazing to play even one song like Richard Thompson, who does, pretty much perfectly, everything you should ever want to do on a guitar. This is a stirringly empathetic account of the thoughts of an US soldier in Iraq. It’s tinged with anger at the absurdity of the conflict, but tender enough that I can imagine a real US soldier being able to endorse it. ‘Dad’ is ‘Baghdad’, of course, though it hints at a young man trying to impress his father, maybe even Bush *fils* trying to please Bush *père*. The ambiguous title gives the whole song a kind of personal hauntedness. ‘Nobody loves me here’ captures both the personal and the globally political and the song becomes literally haunted by mortality towards the end as the singer wonders who that shadow is that he keeps seeing and realizes, ‘must be ol’ death a-walking’.

1. Iron & Wine and Ben Bridwell **There’s No Way Out of Here**

The ever-wonderful Iron & Wine have (well, *has*, since I think it’s pretty much one guy) a great eye for collaborations, with a great great album partnering with Calexico and some terrific work with Band of Horses. Here it’s just the lead singer of Band of Horses, Ben Bridwell, that pairs up with Sam Beam for an album of cover versions. This isn’t a song I remember hearing before, since it’s off David Gilmour’s first solo album, which, even as a big Pink Floyd teenage fan (I know, I know), I’d never listened to. Turns out this was a single off that album and was a moderate hit on US college rock radio, so it’s a less wilfully obscure choice. This is a pretty faithful cover, but they bring more heart to the song and the arrangement is blissfully mournful.

1. Tame Impala **I Don’t Really Mind**

They’re another home-recorded band, aren’t they? This is quite an old one of theirs (well, 2010) but I love it, mainly for the chorus, and the version of the chorus where almost everything but the drums drop out. It’s an example of the near-ubiquity of heavy-psych (kind of an Iron Butterfly sound) I hear a lot at the moment.

 **Dan Rebellato**

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