

Issue 79



February 25th, 2019

Welcome to **Copper #79!**

This issue features my [walkaround](#) of the first-ever [Florida Audio Expo](#) . The turn-out was impressive, and both attendees and exhibitors were happy. I left Denver airport at -6 and frozen fuel lines (?!?) and was able to spend several days in absolutely perfect weather, along with many other refugees from the polar vortex. That certainly didn't hurt the reception received by the show.

This show is going to work.

Prof. Larry Schenbeck looks at Purcell's [King Arthur](#); **Dan Schwartz** looks back at his association with [Rosanne Cash](#) ; **Richard Murison** opens a can of worms on the subject of [audiophile science](#); **Jay Jay French** asks, [what do you hate?](#); **Roy Hall** has more adventures in [Hong Kong](#); **Anne E. Johnson** looks at the ups and downs of the [Red Hot Chili Peppers](#); **Christian James Hand** deconstructs the **Journey** classic, "[Any Way You Want It](#)"; and **I** take a cynical look at the [Grammy Awards](#), and try to decipher the oxymoronic world of [New Old Stock](#). **Woody Woodward** will be back soon with a look at the music and career of John Prine.

The Copper Interview features **John Seetoo** chatting with influential musician and producer [June Millington](#).

Copper #79 wraps up with **Charles Rodrigues** asking [what's in a name?](#)--- and a beautiful **Parting Shot** by [Rich Isaacs](#).

Enjoy, and we'll be back soon with our 3rd Anniversary issue!

Cheers, **Leebs**.

Purcell's *King Arthur*

[Too Much Tchaikovsky](#)

Written by Lawrence Schenbeck



*Merlin waves his Wand; the Scene changes, and discovers the British Ocean in a Storm, AEolus in a Cloud above: Four Winds hanging, &c. . . . AEolus ascends, and the four Winds fly off. The Scene opens, and discovers a calm Sea, to the end of the House [i.e., stage]. An Island arises, to a soft Tune; Britannia seated in the Island, with Fishermen at her Feet, &c. The Tune changes, the Fishermen come ashore, and Dance a while; After which, Pan and a Nereide come on the Stage, and sing . . . The Scene opens above, and discovers the Order of the Garter. [from *King Arthur: or, The British Worthy: A Dramatick Opera*. London, 1691; music by Henry Purcell, text by John Dryden]*

“What,” asks Edward Langhans in his [essay](#) on the theatrical context of Purcell’s dramatic music, “can we make of stage directions like these? How were they carried out—if, indeed, they were? What sort of theatres did they have? . . . Were the playhouses equipped to present such spectacles . . . or were the effects called for with the hope that technicians could devise ways to produce them?” Langhans actually follows these questions with useful discussions of the architecture and equipment of 17th-century London’s two (!) functioning professional theatres, Drury Lane and Dorset Garden, the latter of which was used for musical spectacles like *King Arthur*.

If you’ve seen Ingmar Bergman’s lovely [film version](#) of *Die Zauberflöte*, shot in the Baroque theatre at Drottningholm, Sweden, you’ll get a rough idea of what was available in London. Of such stages, Langhans says “the magical transformations, especially in near-candlelight, are a delight.” Still, no CGI back then; audiences had to rely more on their imaginations to assist with the willing suspension of disbelief.

It’s funny how our earliest experiences with music sometimes come back to mock us—or less often (but to wondrous effect), to engage us anew and on a wholly different level. Whatever we experienced in our piano lessons from sweet old Miss Bidwell, or what we sang in middle-school chorus, or in that garage band we formed a bit later with our besties—it is *but prelude, friends*.

Back when I was barely old enough to vote, I was so taken by the music of Henry Purcell (1659–95) that I conducted his 1694 *Jubilate* at a local church; I think my old friend [David Hickman](#) played the C trumpet part. Later on I'm sure I sang some of Purcell's many solo songs, and maybe some ensemble music with colleagues somewhere.

But one moves on. Other shiny things attract your attention.

Now it's Purcell Week again *chez* Schenbeck, all because of a charming, nearly perfect recording of the music to *King Arthur* ([Alpha 430](#)) from Lionel Meunier and Vox Luminis, Meunier's ultra-versatile group of HIP vocalists. Right, *vocalists*. They regularly collaborate with players who work at a similarly high level; so why did I assume the violinists "&c." ran the show? Okay, Meunier does take a credit as fourth recorder player on this album, but look again and you'll see he also sings bass. I suspect the title "Artistic Director" is partly a matter of convenience and etiquette. It's clear that, for these folks, Henry Purcell essentially runs the show.

If you know much about Purcell's short but extremely full career, you know he spent his early years creating music for church and court: anthems, welcome odes, various instrumental collections. He came to theatre music relatively late, and in that genre remains less well-known, mainly because he worked in what has been called "semi-opera" or "English opera." With the exception of [Dido and Aeneas](#), his theatre works are not through-composed operas but rather what might be called *enhanced incidental music*. (He also wrote *non-enhanced* incidental music, i.e., theatrical overtures and entr'actes with an occasional song or dance thrown in, which I'm not discussing here.)

In Purcell's five semi-operas—*Dioclesian*, *The Fairy Queen*, *The Tempest*, *The Indian Queen*, and *King Arthur*—there's still a lot of spoken dialogue. *King Arthur* has a libretto by John Dryden tailored specifically to Purcell's musical strengths. The principal characters—Arthur, Merlin, Arthur's sweetheart Emmeline, various Saxon villains—do not sing, because Restoration audiences wouldn't have understood such a thing. As Isaline Claeys explains in her brief but helpful liner notes,

In [Dryden's] "dramatic operas" . . . music illustrates scenes of dreams, inner reflection, hymns or magic. According to custom, the sung parts were reserved for mythological or legendary characters, while the dramatic protagonists expressed themselves in speech.

If someone onstage is singing, they're probably a fairy, a ghost, an evil spirit, or a metaphor. Cupid gets some nice moments, as does the Cold Genius (i.e., Bringer of Frostbite), several Shepherds and Shepherdesses, and the occasional Saxon Priest. This works out fine, although if you're serious about following the plot, you'll need to pay attention to Claeys' synopsis. One or two *huge* events go unmarked in the musical sequence, since only principal characters are involved: at the end of Act Two, for example, little Emmeline is abducted by Oswald, King of Kent ("a Saxon and a heathen"). But all we hear at the end is a Shepherds' Chorus, Hornpipe, and Air. They're quite nice, of course.

This would be where I provide two or three audio clips to illustrate high points of the recording. But Alpha's distributor [outhere](#) and [Presto Classical](#) have beaten me to it. Click on their links and you'll get access to clips from every one of the 51 tracks. (I recommend especially the excerpts from the famous Frost Scene, beginning with Act III: "What Power Art Thou" and ending with the Borée and Hornpipe. Also fun: the Act IV Trumpet Tune and Act V "Fairest Isle." (Note that most of these tracks are between 2 and 4 minutes long; some are shorter. Goldilocks would say that's just right.)

You'll want the booklet, digital or hard copy, because it's got complete text in English and French. In case you want to see the rest of Dryden's text, here is a link to the [entire play](#).

Beautifully sung, played, and recorded. What is the secret of this music's charm? I think it lies in the

way Purcell shapes the tunes, rhythms, and settings so that they seem simply perfect and perfectly simple. This saga of Arthur, King of the Britons, becomes a family romance; one imagines people discovering it as if it were a travel diary grandpa kept in his youth. (It helps that grandpa encountered witches, warlocks, and beneficent wizards on his trip.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xhdXsd3qT8>

(On the YouTube page you can find links to individual numbers if you scroll down to gemstone212121's comment. Note that this video was made three years ago, when Vox Luminis collaborated with La Fenice and its conductor Jean Tubéry.)

Did the Grammys Ever Matter?

[The Audio Cynic](#)

Written by Bill Leebens



Somewhere in the hazy past, I wrote that nostalgia ain't what it used to be. The cynical part of me thinks that the rosy glow with which we surround many of our memories may be akin to the miasma that rises from a fetid swamp. How's that for a romantic view?

And yet, and yet: when I conceived of the title of this piece, it was out of a sense that the Grammys have always been a self-righteous popularity contest amongst the lacquered and overdressed, and that music has had very little to do with it. I was happy to compile a litany of the most egregious winners of all time, the memorable mishaps, and so on. But having reviewed the proceedings of some past years---I'm torn. Honest-to-God conflicted.

My memories of the Grammy awards center around the late '70s and early '80s, when there was still a little novelty to seeing rock music on TV. In my mind, this was also the era of the treaciest, most annoying major Grammy winners. 1980: The Doobie Brothers win four Grammys for their album *Minute by Minute*, featuring the champion earworm, "What a Fool Believes". 1981: FIVE Grammy awards for Christopher Cross?? "Sailing"? "Arthur's Theme"?

Following that there was a string of years in which Stevie Wonder and Paul Simon dominated---and It's hard to argue with that.

Looking back a few years to 1967---I don't know about you, but for me, that was a pretty damned significant year in a significant period in modern music. How badly did they mess things up then?

Song of the Year, Record of the Year: "Up, Up, and Away" by the 5th Dimension? Granted, this was the period during which Jimmy Webb was everywhere, regarded by many as a genius---but this was likely the weakest of his many chart-toppers. And who knew that Johnny Rivers produced it? Sheesh!

Amazingly enough, most of the year's winners were spot-on: Album of the Year, Best Contemporary Album, Best Engineered Album: **Sgt. Pepper**. Other winners? "**Gentle on my Mind**", for both Glen Campbell and John Hartford. "**Respect**", for Aretha. The **Mission Impossible** theme, Lalo Schifrin. "**Ode to Billie Joe**". Some seriously good records.

In more recent history, the screw-ups seem more memorable than the winners. 1998 had two of those moments; when my classmate Shawn Colvin and her producer/writing partner John Leventhal went to accept their Song of the Year award for "Sunny Came Home" and ODB of Wu Tang interrupted with a rambling rant about "Wu Tang for the children":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPGaTjBW-Jo>

...and then a shirtless dancer with "Soy Bomb" painted on his chest appeared during Bob Dylan's performance of "Love Sick", As you'd expect/hope, Dylan ignored him:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJqMhK8XdzU>

If you can read [this explanation](#) of what, exactly, "Soy Bomb" was supposed to mean without rolling your eyes, you have more self-control than I have.

To be fair, 1998 was also the year that Luciano Pavarotti got sick, and his scheduled performance of "Nessun Dorma" was taken over by...*Aretha Franklin*? From an operatic performance it may not have been great, but as an act of guts and pure dominance of the stage, it is astonishing:
<https://vimeo.com/285410731>

Clearly there have been meaningful years and meaningless years at the Grammy Awards. Let's fast-forward through too many weepy Adele performances, Kanye West channeling ODB, and GaGa in an egg to this year. It's hard to get prickly when several acquaintances are among the nominees---but then, they all lost. What, then, are we left with?

Jennifer Lopez in a Motown tribute? How does this make sense? How can a group of people sit around a table discussing this and conclude, "Great idea"?

Best Pop Vocal Album to Willie Nelson's **My Way**? I love Willie, and he has produced brilliant, beautiful records. This is not one of them.

How does an annoying Zep-light act like Greta Van Fleet win Best Rock Album? At least they lost the other two categories in which they were nominated. Their performance on **Saturday Night Live** was the worst I've ever seen, next to the baffling slow-motion kabuki theater of Nicki Minaj. And in its 45 years, SNL has hosted some truly dreadful performances.

There's no accounting for taste---or lack of it. Year after year in recent decades, the Grammy Awards have proven that---just like the Super Bowl halftime show.

At least the Super Bowl usually has decent commercials.

Audiophile Science

[Quibbles and Bits](#)

Written by Richard Murison



There is one consistent misconception that non-scientists have about science, and that is the Albert Einstein problem - the idea that major scientific problems can be solved by a lone genius who sweeps away decades of dead-end sawdust and comes up with a miraculous total solution. That stuff only ever happens in the movies, and even then the genius scientist either uses his new invention to take over the world, or becomes indentured in the service of a mad megalomaniac with the same idea. I don't recall off-hand a movie where the mad genius starts a high-end audio company.

Back in the real world, science doesn't typically work like that. Individual scientists make progress in tiny steps, none of them particularly noticeable outside of their own niche fields. But the net result, seen from 10,000 feet, is a remarkable overall rate of progress. 20 years ago, my first home internet connection came via a dial-up modem, which was so slow that its speed was measured in baud. Today, my home internet connection has 25Mb/s download speed and 15Mb/s upload speed, and I can access it wirelessly anywhere in my home. Nobody invented that. The state of the art simply progressed from dial-up to FTTH in an uncountable sequence of individual tiny nibbles...and it continues to progress today at approximately the same rate.

Because of the success of the scientific method in virtually every aspect of our modern lives, it is natural to look at the problems we would like to resolve in our high-end audio world, and expect the scientific method to provide the most obvious path forward. We've all come across the biggest elephant in the audiophile skeptic's user manual, the double blind test (DBT), which is inevitably cast as the *Gold Standard* for the scientific method. And although we've also seen countless rebuffs to the DBT argument, they suffer in comparison to the apparent simplicity of the DBT proposition. In the end, nobody ends up satisfied, whichever side of the fence you may sit on.

The core of the audiophile problem is that the objective of a high-end audio system is to provide a satisfactory audio experience to its owner. That's the beginning and end of it. The purpose is most

assuredly not to satisfy the rationalist expectations of an armchair expert somewhere in Seattle. But the manufacturer of audio equipment is in many ways in a similar position. He knows no more than the armchair expert what the owner is experiencing, yet he has his own set of rational expectations. But where the armchair expert can pontificate to his heart's delight with no concern for the consequences, if the manufacturer's equipment isn't satisfying his owners' expectations he does have a real-world problem on his hands.

What's to stop the scientific method from addressing this core problem? The fundamental issue of science at play here is how, exactly, we can know what a listener is hearing, and - more to the point - how we can quantify it. For example, we can ask a listener whether he hears a good stereo image, and he can tell us yes he does, or no he doesn't, or he can maybe describe in detail how he perceives the stereo image. But we can't quantify it with a score on a scale of 1-100, such that you and I can both listen to the exact same system and report independently, reliably, and reproducibly, that we are hearing a stereo image with an imaging property of 74.3%. It's a problem because science is only really helpful with things it can meaningfully measure.

That wasn't a problem for the guy who designed my DSL modem. He had a set of straightforward performance specifications as long as your arm that he had to meet, and he wasn't at all concerned by whether or not a customer in Peoria would find his product preferable in a DBT. Meeting the performance specifications was **all** the product had to do, and, frankly, all the customer in Peoria was expecting from it. In fact, *exceeding* the specs would be a problem, one which he would ultimately solve by re-designing it using cheaper and cheaper parts until it *just met* all the specs.

Now, the armchair expert in Seattle doesn't care either, and just prates on about how this, that, or the other piece of audiophilia is snake oil unless proven otherwise by a DBT. The audio manufacturer, on the other hand, cares deeply. He still needs to be satisfying his customers. It's an existential challenge for him. And in the absence of a proven scientific method with which to address his toughest design challenges, he has to rely on his experience and skills.

So why doesn't science just step in and address these issues? The answer is that there is a huge gulf between what we know and what we need to know. We've pretty much come as far as we can with our understanding of what the ear can detect. Far enough to know that the things we still don't know in that area aren't what are holding us back. After all, it is clear that *mature* audiophiles with measurably degraded hearing are still critically demanding of high-end audio systems, and are still among the most valued judges of a quality system.

Front-line basic research interest today is more concerned with how the brain perceives what the ears detect. And the biggest challenges facing scientists in that field is being able to quantify what it is that the brain is perceiving. We are only taking our first baby steps in this field at the moment, and it will be a long time before major developments in the field will give rise to significant advances in high-end audio.

This was brought home to me during some listening tests with Prof. Edgar Choueiri's BACCH system, which I have previously written about in [Copper #60](#) and [#61](#). In particular, I was playing with the system set up such that a pair of headphones emulates the sound of a pair of loudspeakers in the room. If you do the demo properly, even the most fastidious audiophile can be totally fooled into thinking he or she is listening to the speakers when in fact they are listening to the headphones. But what is interesting is that I found that this *illusion* is easily shattered. Under certain conditions my brain would stop perceiving a pair of external loudspeakers, and instead perceived the diffuse sound field typical of a set of headphones. I then found I could usually force my brain into switching back to the loudspeaker illusion by concentrating on looking hard at the speakers, but it took a surprising degree of effort. The realization that the brain can interpret the exact same high-quality

sound presented to the ears as being one of two binary sound fields - *and switch between them* - was very interesting. The scientific challenge is to independently measure and quantify effects such as these, and we are nowhere near being able to do that.

It illustrates at least one aspect of the problem of conducting any sort of structured audiophile listening test. If an audiophile wants to judge the impact of a change to his system, he will first want to ensure that his listening experience is set up to be exactly how he is accustomed to hearing it. After all, our systems are there to be listened to, and we set them up so that our listening experiences are as well-optimized as we can make them. However, that set-up may not be conducive to a formalized test, with appropriate controls. If, for the purposes of the test, I rig your listening seat with electrodes in the cushion which periodically deliver a serious jolt to your rear end, I suggest that it is unlikely that the outcome of the test is going to be reliable. That's an extreme example, but the core point is a very strong one. External factors influence how our brains perceive what our ears hear, and we don't yet understand that well enough to take proper account of it in a scientifically controlled test. It is clearly a layered and complex matter.

Where does that leave us, then, if we wish to bring the scientific method to a study of audiophile matters? The bottom line is that if we wish to definitively study the audible impact of a cable (or an isolation mount, or passive preamplifier, or whatever), science does not yet give us the ability to make objective measurements of the critical outcomes. Science can't even tell us what the listener actually hears, because the listener could be a youngster with perfect hearing or an older guy whose hearing has demonstrably degraded, or someone with a bit of an ear infection...and in any case those factors don't seem to make a fundamental difference to a listener's ability to perceive the key qualities of a high-end audio system. Neither is science able to tell us how the listeners' brains are perceiving the sounds we play for them, something which we know is affected greatly by external influences. We're not even able to observe them, let alone quantify them.

Consequently we're reduced to asking listeners to self-report what they are hearing, with the results being generally unsatisfactory when employed in a scientific approach to high-end audiophilia, not to mention unacceptable to the armchair expert in Seattle. The alternative is to be some kind of a science fundamentalist and proffer as irrefutable truth the notion that if I can't measure it, you can't hear it. But like fundamentalism in all walks of life, I'm not sure how, if at all, that can ever lead to progress.

The primary take-away is that this is a situation which does not really lend itself to the scientific mind. The curious mind, yes. But the professional scientific mind, no. Because the professional scientist wants to see a way forward, and the road forward is paved with experiments yielding hard, meaningful data, which can be used to either prove or disprove an interesting theory. Invite a reputable audio research scientist to oversee a DBT involving the audibility of some piece of audiophile gear and your response will involve strings of garlic, signs of the cross, and lengthy unexpected commitments in Antarctica.

What is left is what the leading lights in our industry actually do. It is a combination of trust in the designers' own ears (and those of a limited number of trusted colleagues and acquaintances), and proven test methodologies which have withstood the test of time. These tests set about measuring things that are known to correlate well with desirable qualitative results. Things like distortion in amplifiers are good examples...it is clear that lower distortion has got to be a *Good Thing*. But we mustn't forget that there was a time when we only measured THD, and in our haste to drive THD values ever lower we made amplifiers that actually sounded worse. We needed to learn about IMD, and how to measure it, in order to make real progress. We are currently in a similar place with phase response, and we are learning that linear phase response tends to correlate with better sound. But does it follow that hard-line efforts to minimize phase nonlinearity will always pay *de facto* sonic

dividends? We will find out in time.

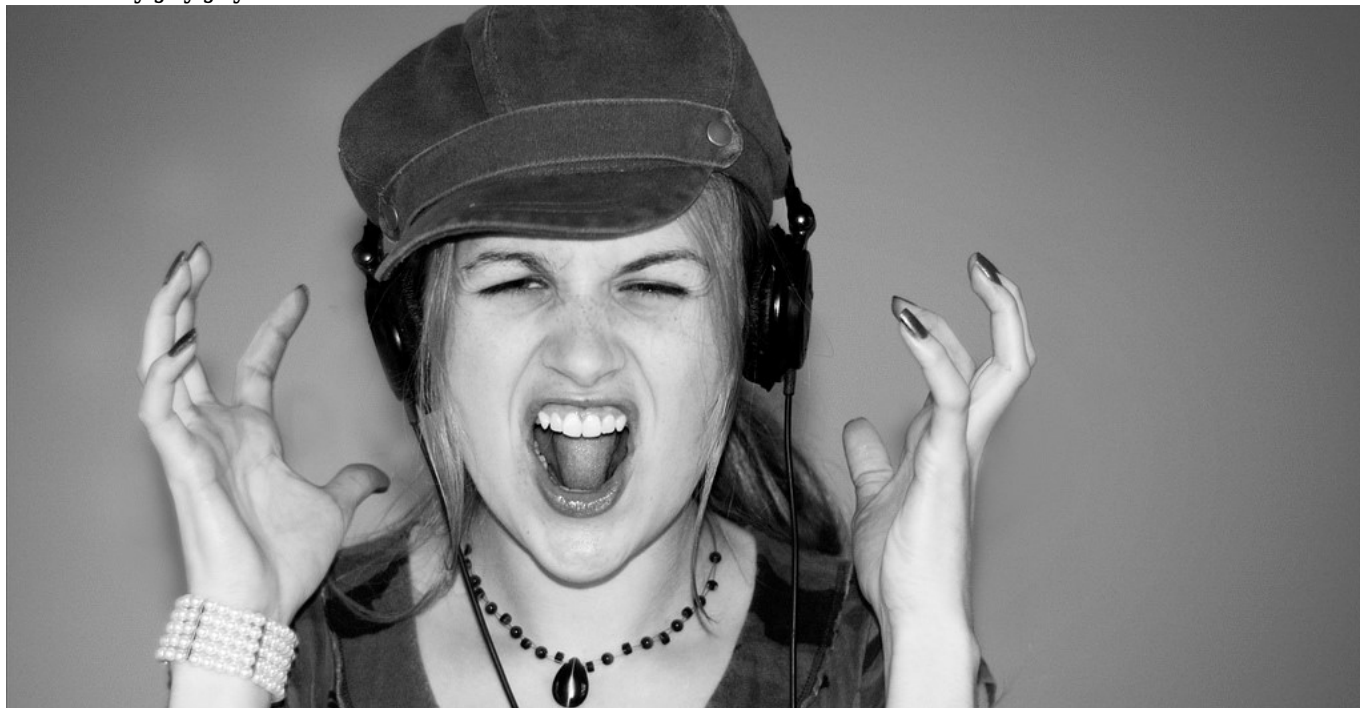
Science will play its role in all this. For example, linearizing phase response requires a lot of in-depth scientific knowledge, not only in understanding the implications of tinkering with phase response, but also in correctly measuring it. But the end results will continue to be driven by what listeners hear - or, being pedantic about it, what they perceive they hear.

By the way, if there's an armchair expert out there in Seattle - which, on the balance of probabilities there surely must be - rest assured that I don't have you, specifically, in mind.

I Hate...(Fill in the Blank)

[Twisted Systems](#)

Written by Jay Jay French



When I'm introduced as Jay Jay French of Twisted Sister at parties or social events, the first question I'm asked is, "So what music are you listening to these days?"

The questioner is usually in the age range of 40-60. Before I answer, I usually ask, "Well, what do you listen to?"

The typical response is, "I'm still into 80's metal." I then ask, "Do you like current music, like hip hop?"

I usually receive one of the following responses:

"I hate Hip Hop; it's all garbage and it all sounds the same."

"I hate Rap; it's not music, it all sounds the same."

"I hate Pop; it's nowhere near as good as when I was a kid."

"I hate country, it all sounds the same."

And so on and so forth.

I have been just as guilty over the years when I have been dismissive of jazz, jazz fusion, and classical music.

So, what really is the deal here?

The deal is simple; we have turned into our parents.

My dad thought everything after 1945 was terrible.

He summed up my entire love of the Beatles, Stones, and all the incredible groundbreaking music of

the 60's with this simple statement:

"After 1945 (why that year, I have no idea but I presume meaning after WWII) everything you (meaning me) listen to is just "baby, baby, baby, yeah, yeah, yeah."

That simple, that easy. Case closed.

And that is exactly what has happened to my generation.

Now, hold on before you feel the need to instantly respond to this essay, saying that you have a much more sophisticated sense of taste and music, that you like some Rap or Hip Hop, Country or (fill in any genre), and that there are just two kinds of music (good or bad).

All are politically correct responses, and I'm sure that some of you really appreciate many, if not all, kinds of music.

The fact is really simple.

When one chooses to not care about the differences in the evolution of a particular musical genre, then one can simply dismiss the whole genre as "It all sounds the same" in one broad stroke.

Do all British invasion bands sound the same? Do all Motown acts sound the same? Do all San Francisco Haight Ashbury bands sound the same? Can you tell the difference between all Prog bands, all Midwest 70's era arena rock bands, all Blues artists, all classical composers, etc.?

Of course not!

When you are passionate about anything, then it MATTERS to you to know and appreciate the differences.

Are there bad versions of the music that you love?

As subjective as that is, of course there are!

That's why you listen to what you listen to and can criticize, with varying degrees of expertise, why you don't like a certain version of a chosen genre.

I love the Blues, but not *every* blues artist.

I love metal bands, but not *every* metal band.

Some Beatles albums are better than others simply because ***I KNOW THEM!***

In truth, most musical genres, within their geographical and chronological time frames, have some similarities. That's because artists (and producers) that influence other artists take some of the successful sounds and copy them to sound commercially relevant to a particular audience.

Whether it's an homage or a cynical attempt to jump on the bandwagon, the effect to a non-fan is the same, ergo: "It all sound the same."

To an untrained ear, the following tunes (released in 1964), played in no particular order, will all sound the same:

"Ferry Cross the Mercy"

"I'm Telling You Now"
"Bad To Me"
"Till There was You"
"Needles & Pins"
"A World Without Love"

Yep, they all sound the same, *except* they don't to me because I care enough to know the difference between **Gerry & The Pacemakers, Freddy & The Dreamers, Billy J Kramer & the Dakotas, The Beatles, The Searchers, and Peter and Gordon.**

Add to this the visual images of the artists. Once a look becomes "in" then it seems that all artists jump on that look, either because they want to or they are directed to by a manager or record label.

Whether it's art, music, acting, etc., whatever is hot and the *flavor of the month* is copied, giving further ammunition to someone who wants to dismiss a whole group of music.

Don't waste your time by telling me that The Grateful Dead don't sound like the Airplane, or that Led Zeppelin doesn't sound like Pink Floyd.

Why?

Because to my dad, it all sounded the same and it all *sucked!*

Please keep that in mind the next time someone asks you if you like a certain kind of music.

For me, I really don't *get* Opera, Classical, or Jazz fusion.

The truth is, I just haven't spent the time to listen and understand it enough, and even if I did, I may still not like it!

Keep this in mind the next time someone asks your opinion of a musical genre.

The politically correct way to answer, if you really hate a specific kind of music, is that you just haven't had the time to appreciate the genre.

Or...

You can dismiss it all by saying:

"I hate (fill in the blank)."

Hong Kong

[Music'al Notes](#)

Written by Roy Hall



On my many visits to China, I always make a point of going through or leaving from Hong Kong. Hong Kong is a western sea of tranquility amongst the tumult of China. It is also a place where English is ubiquitously spoken.

Aberdeen.

I have a friend who used to be the manager of the Aberdeen Marina Club in Hong Kong Island. The Aberdeen Marina Club, the foremost private club in Hong Kong, caters to the very rich and very famous. Membership is by recommendation only and if you are accepted, you have to pay almost half a million US dollars to join, not to mention a smaller fortune each year to remain active. The club houses seven restaurants, a marina for your yacht, a swimming pool, an ice skating rink, two floors of kid's zones, and a bowling alley, among other amenities.

My friend had an apartment on top of the club with a guest room across the roof, and I was able to stay there a few times while visiting Hong Kong (I was one of the few people to gain temporary membership). Meals were fun and copious, and sometimes I managed to converse with some of the members, though mostly they kept to themselves. The food was excellent with a vast array of seafood, meats, cheeses, and so on. My friend told me that every bit of food, including the flour for the fresh breads, was imported from Australia, the US, the UK, or Thailand. He said his members wouldn't eat any locally produced food.

On one of my visits, my friend suggested we go somewhere else for lunch. We took a taxi toward Repulse Bay and from there boarded a shuttle boat to Middle Island, home to one of the facilities of the Royal Kong Yacht Club--another exclusive Hong Kong club open to members only. My friend had reciprocal rights with other clubs so we entered, sat down in their spectacular bar overlooking the water, and ordered a bottle of Bordeaux. We drank the bottle, plus two more glasses, while watching ex-pat Englishmen in their sailing whites getting drunk and noisy. We took the shuttle back to the main road and flagged the first cab, which took us to the Hong Kong Cricket Club. Every so often you go to a place and have a mind freeze. The cricket club was so English. The women's ugly clothes, the men's pasty faces, and their cricket whites made me think I was back in England among people who disapproved of me. The playing field was so flat and green that had it not been for the

hills behind it I could have sworn we were in Britain. We ordered another bottle of Bordeaux and settled in to watch the most boring of games, Cricket. Before returning home, I hazily remember thinking how amazingly well fish and chips went with Bordeaux.

An Irish bar.

The Scottish accent was unmistakable and so I had to go over and introduce myself. He was a man in his fifties who worked for Mattel in China. Travelling abroad can be very lonely so I use any excuse I can to meet people and entertain myself. He was more than happy to meet a fellow Scotsman, although there are many ex-pat Scots in Hong Kong and neighboring southern China. He had lived in China for many years working at various companies before becoming head of quality control at Mattel. In our conversation, he explained that the only way to really control quality in China was to have your own factories with western engineers monitoring and testing all raw materials coming in to the facility. This information was somewhat upsetting, as I was trying to figure out ways to certify that my products did not contain harmful components and had to rely on outside companies to test my goods. He was a most impressive man and I admired his drive and commitment to his job. A few years later, around Christmas 2007, Mattel had to recall about a million toys because they contained lead paint. I have often wondered what went wrong.

Another bar.

In an Irish bar in Hong Kong, I met an Australian who had just attended his grandparent's 50th wedding anniversary in Melbourne. He told me the story of the toast his grandfather made.

"50 years ago today, I met my wife for the first time. In those days we were forbidden to see each other until the ceremony. When she took off the veil, I thought she was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. We got married and I was so happy.

"Some years passed and we celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary. Again, I looked at her and she was even more beautiful and my heart was full of love.

"At our 20th anniversary, I again saw her with our children standing nearby and she hadn't changed a bit. She was radiant as ever.

"When we celebrated our 30th anniversary with our kids and grandchildren, she now had some grey hairs but that lovely smile still melted my heart.

"Our 40th anniversary was wonderful. The kids, grandkids, and even some great-grandchildren were there. I gazed at her and even though she had aged, she was no less beautiful and I was content.

"And here we are at our 50th anniversary--"

"Enough already!"

New Old Stock

[Vintage Whine](#)

Written by Bill Leebens



Newbies to the audio world encounter a lot of puzzling terminology, some of which seems oxymoronic. One such term that took me a while to understand is NOS---New Old Stock. If you parse the phrase out in segments, it actually makes sense...at least, more sense than "jumbo shrimp" or "military intelligence".

Okay: think of "new" as meaning "unused", not, "just made". "Old stock" is pretty much self-evident; think of a general store that's gone out of business after 100 years. Odds are, there will be merchandise that's been on the shelves for a long while, that just never sold: Big Chief tablets marked 5 cents, Wrangler jeans with button flies, crank-style egg-beaters. You get the idea: you've likely seen truckloads of such stuff at flea markets or on eBay. So: NOS means products made some time ago, but unused, likely never sold. Capiche?

I know it's hard to believe, but a lot of folks in the audio and electronics fields are...*HOARDERS*. I've seen radio and TV repair guys who picked up anything they thought might be useful *someday*, any time a colleague died or retired. Often times, the goods aren't even related to the gear they usually work on, but are picked up as material for future trades. I've also been to estate sales of audiophiles and ham operators where the surviving family members just had to move 20 cubic yards of stuff. Those are the times that try an audio geek's soul: do I pay a nickel a ton, or do I try to help the family get what this stuff is really worth?

Over the last 40 years, I've done both. And there are some actions that shame me in my memory: I'll

do better next time. I hope.

It's not often that a longtime audio dealer goes out of business and you encounter a bunch of now-very-expensive collectable tonearms MIB (mint in box, a term stolen from the world of toy collectors), but it has happened, even to me. More often than not, if you see the term NOS applied to audio gear, it's going to be applied to vacuum tubes---valves, if you're east of the pond.

The last 30 years have seen a major resurgence in the production of new tubes worldwide, but before that happened, there was a generalized panicky sense that tubes would be unavailable, and that whatever tubes were still being made, were junk. That impression was furthered by inferior-grade tubes that mimicked the construction and appearance, down to the packaging, of better-quality tubes from the US, UK, Netherlands, Japan, and Russia. Even recent Chinese and Russian tubes of passable quality were faked, in some cases by scraping off the original silk-screened markings on the glass envelope of the tube, and forging the marks of a more-desirable tube.

Frankly, I think there are easier ways to make a buck. Oh, well.

The result of this mania was to create a halo effect around NOS tubes, the sense that old was always better. Let's be real here: just as there were junky brands of electronics or speakers made in the past, there were tubes that were lesser-grade. It's unrealistic to assume that everything olden is golden---right?

And yet, many of those old tubes were sold at premium prices. They may have been used a bit, for all we know, they may have been gassy (meaning the vacuum was breached, and air has made its way into the tube), they may have been used in a guitar amp by a traveling musician, and have elements just barely hanging together. Such was the mystique of NOS.

These days there's a fair variety of new, high-quality tubes being made. There are also well-established dealers who can properly grade and match old tubes so that you can be sure that you get what you pay for.

I don't doubt that certain old tubes have irreproducible magical qualities. I pulled enough unused Western Electric tubes out of old theaters to catch a little bit of the fever. But I'd be more excited to find an old 16" Presto or Fairchild broadcast turntable new in a crate, stashed, forgotten, in a small-town warehouse. But to go ape over dirty, untested tubes simply because they're old, is naive.

To me, the most exciting use of NOS tubes, speakers, whatever, are when those elements are used by mad scientists like [Vu Hoang](#) (check his work in the Tampa show report), [jc morrison](#), [Jeffrey Jackson and Dave Slagle](#), or [Jonathan Weiss](#) to create something familiar, but transcendently different and new. In my mind, that's the best of both worlds.

But then: different strokes, right?

Red Hot Chili Peppers

[Off the Charts](#)

Written by Anne E. Johnson



A bass player named Flea is the group's most stable member. But, despite all their drug-related traumas and personnel turnover, Red Hot Chili Peppers endure, still heating up the airwaves with their distinctive take on funk music.

They started in the early '80s in L.A., calling themselves Tony Flow and the Miraculously Majestic Masters of Mayhem (and you thought their current name was long!) - Anthony Kiedis singing, Flea (born Michael Balzary) on bass, drummer Jack Irons, and guitarist Hillel Slovak.

Slovak was a question mark from the get-go. By the time the band was ready to cut its first album in 1984, he had already quit. The divorce didn't last long, but it did mean Jack Sherman played guitar on *Red Hot Chili Peppers*.

The musicians ended up being very disappointed in the work of producer Andy Gill, who they thought calmed down their sound too much. Kiedis has claimed that "Police Helicopter" best demonstrates what the band thought they were about. There's a raw freedom about this track - punk funk, if you will -- that apparently is close to the vision they had for themselves. Kind of odd, then, that they didn't return to this level of wildness on subsequent albums with different producers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeSgEkFOnyo>

The second album, *Freaky Styley* (1985), is the last to feature Cliff Martinez on drums. And they didn't mess around when choosing a new producer: they went with funkmaster George Clinton. To prove their bona fides, they released a cover of "If You Want Me To Stay," by Sly & the Family Stone, as one of the singles.

But even more telling is the funk track they wrote themselves, "The Brothers Cup." Those bassy, twanging guitar licks sound pretty authentic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UP2jnVc1quE>

During the tour for *Freaky Styley*, Kiedis got so heavily into drugs that the band fired him temporarily with the understanding that he could come back after rehab. He was back in time to record *The Uplift Mofo Party Plan*, released in 1987. The original drummer, Jack Irons, came back too.

An interesting cut is the frantic cover of Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues." Flea's bass bounces like fallout from a fusion bomb. The tempo and urgency of Kiedis' declamation gives the lyrics a rap vibe.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLeMY_L3Sw

Unfortunately, drugs were still an issue. Kiedis started using again, and guitarist Slovak died of a heroin overdose after the album's tour. Deeply distressed by the situation, Irons then left the band. Chad Smith was brought in on drums, and he's still with them today. An even bigger change was the addition of John Frusciante on guitar, pulling the band's style a bit more toward a focus on melody.

While making *Mother's Milk* (1989), Frusciante and producer Michael Beinhorn reportedly bashed heads over the latter's heavy-handed overdubbing.

With a lyrical guitarist, it made sense to cover some Jimi Hendrix, father of the singing ax. Only one of those Hendrix tracks made it onto the album, but two additional live Hendrix songs were included on a 2003 special edition. Here's one of them, "Castles Made of Sand." Between Kiedis' subdued delivery and the sound balance, this really is all about the guitar:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8Xv4Mz3fBo>

Although *Mother's Milk* was a commercial success, 1991's *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* sold even better. In fact, Frusciante was so overwhelmed by the rock-star experience that he quit the band in the middle of the tour for this album. Once they'd found another guitarist (Dave Navarro, who was only with them briefly), they released *One Hot Minute* in 1995.

Their sales power dipped for this one, but it contains some intriguing songs. Kiedis was once again fighting addiction and losing. The painful, twisting harmonies of "Falling into Grace" is a good example from the album - experimental, relatively low key, self-referential. The African-influenced chanting at 2:38 is especially noteworthy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5531o-YeGtk>

Navarro left. The band basically split up. But the Chili Peppers weren't bested yet. They leapt back to the top in 1999 with *Californication*, their biggest-selling album, aided by the return of Frusciante's singing guitar. (You need a spread sheet to keep track of this stuff.) They followed it in 2002 with the more modestly successful *By the Way*.

"Minor Thing" is an up-tempo, pop-tinged tune - classic '90s West Coast rock -- with some soulful guitar riffs and bone-rattling drumming by Smith, particularly in the extended instrumental coda.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3bRH63Kxgw>

The Chili Pepper's first number-one album was *Stadium Arcadium* (2006). Its five singles include the smash "Dani California" (at least as famous for its clever video mimicking famous bands of pop music history as for the song itself). It was another five years before they hit the studio again.

Josh Klinghoffer officially joined as guitarist for the 2011 album *Look Around*. Flea has claimed this is an album about life and death, and credits J.S. Bach and experimental electronica for influencing his sound at the time.

"Even You, Brutus" could be described as early Dylan meets early hip hop - finally a tribute to the style of the original "Subterranean Homesick Blues," a song they'd taken so far afield 14 years before.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TE4e3hmnDNs>

The band's most recent album, *The Getaway* (2016), had a rougher birth than usual. Flea broke his arm severely, which delayed the start of recording after they'd already written a lot of songs. Then they split with longtime producer Rick Rubin and brought in Danger Mouse (Brian Burton), known for his work with CeeLo Green, Gnarls Barkley, and The Black Keys. Once Flea was back in the saddle, the new producer made them scrap all their pre-existing material and start fresh.

While *The Getaway* had no hit singles, diehard fans appreciated its offerings, including the mysteriously named "This Ticonderoga." (As one YouTube commenter put it, "It's either about the fort or the pencil company.") While the title's meaning remains obscure, the song seems to be a philosophical look back at decades of rock-star existence: "We are all just soldiers in this battlefield of life / One thing that's for certain is my burning appetite..."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=773bV7xNQOQ>

The Chili Peppers are touring during 2019, with good old originals Kiedis and Flea, returning guitarist Klinghoffer, and longtime drummer Smith. The funk, you might say, is far from finished.

Any Way You Want It

[Hand Picked](#)

Written by Christian James Hand



Arite...let's get it out of the way, shall we? Journey is friggin' **AWESOME!** That's where we are going to start with this session of Hand Picked. If you think differently, then it says more about you than it does about Journey. They became one of the biggest Hit Machines in all of music. Their *Greatest Hits* has spent over 500 weeks on the album charts. They continue to sell out arenas and fill them with the sugary, popstastic, hookiness that the crowd sings at the TOP of their lungs, night after night, years after having appeared on the charts. With a bloke who isn't even the lead singer everyone knows. A massive accomplishment. Hit after hit. Night after night.

However, it wasn't always that way.

The original lineup of the band came out of the San Francisco scene in the early '70s. It was made up of members of a few other bands: Prairie Prince of The Tubes was the skinsman, Neal Schon, who had been poached by Carlos Santana to play in his band at the RIDICULOUS age of FIFTEEN, on guitar, Greg Rolie on keys, and Ross Valory and George Tickner from the ATROCIOUSLY named Frumious Bandersnatch, what a shock that THAT didn't take off, rounding out the team. They had first been in the business of providing the backup band for other artists in the scene, but abandoned that idea and decided, instead, to make their own choons. So, they did. Nobody really cared.

Over the next few years there were a couple of other iterations, Schon on vocals, etc., and a deal with Columbia records that failed to impress anyone with its sales. Members left and came back. The usual soap opera stylings of a band trying to work out what the hell it's doing. No easy feat. It can, and has, broken the spirit of many before. In late '77, a young Steve Perry was contacted by Journey's management after hearing some demos he had recorded with his band Alien Project. That project had broken up after the death of one of its members in a car accident, and Perry had returned home to pursue other paths in life. It was his Grandmother who convinced him to take the call. Sliding doors, I tell you. [Robert Fleischman](#) had been singing for Journey at this point, but it

wasn't jelling. Perry was snuck into a gig with the band under the auspices of being a fill in roadie, and while Fleischman was away from the mic at a soundcheck Steve stepped to it and sang a few notes. Bobby was OUT!

However, we still don't have all of the characters needed.

In 1980 Greg Rolie left the band and recommended [Jonathan Cain](#), of The Babys, as his replacement in the Keyboard Department. This is when shit goes BALLISTIC! The song-writing team of Cain/Perry proceeded to take the band to heights even they couldn't have imagined.

Some stats:

2 Diamond Albums

8 Multi-Platinum Albums

2 Gold Albums

18 Top 40 singles

6 Top 10 singles

2 #1's

48 million records sold in the U.S.

75 million records sold Worldwide

Ain't that some shit?

"Any Way You Want It" is from Journey's 6th album, 1980's *Departure*. This song precursors the arrival of Jonathan Cain and was written by Schon and Perry. It was a medium-level hit and definitely hints at the future, WAY MORE popstastic version of the band as it burns off any of the San Fran Jam Band history it may have had. The two of them wrote it while Journey shared the road with Thin Lizzy. They modeled it on the Thin Lizzy "guitar-voice, guitar-voice, more guitar-guitar-guitar-voice" approach to song-writing and, once you know that, it DEFINITELY wears that influence on its sleeve. Hard to unhear the connection when you find that out. By the way...Journey and Thin Lizzy on TOUR together?!? What were THOSE stories like?!

The Players:

- [Steve Perry](#) - lead vocals
- [Neal Schon](#) - lead & rhythm guitars, backing vocals
- [Ross Valory](#) - bass guitar, backing vocals
- [Gregg Rolie](#) - mellotron, organ, backing vocals
- [Steve Smith](#) - drums

TO THE TAPE!!

The Drums: Steve Smith entered the frame in late 1978. Aynsley Dunbar was fired from Journey and proceeded to go across town and take-over the Drum Dept in fellow San Fran Hit Machine Jefferson Starship. Smith is a Berklee grad with an extensive knowledge, and ability, in Jazz Percussion. He still goes out with his Jazz band and plies the boards. He's a badass. I love his playing so much. He is such a MUSICAL player, as one would imagine, having come from Jazz where nobody is simply sitting back. All instruments are playing PARTS! And it shows in his choices. The playing in "Any Way..." seems simple at first and it definitely provides the back-bone to the jam. However, Smith rests a majority of the groove on the cool trick of the bass drum and snare hitting TOGETHER inside the groove and helping to push the lyrical pattern through the dense instrumentation and locking the "chug-chug" of the guitars to the steel beam of The Pocket. It's a simple trick, but SO effective. Each part of the song has a different feel to it. A different vibe. Hi-hats give way to ride

cymbals in the choruses and jam sections. China crashes punctuate the pushes in the choruses and mark "The One" as the song builds to a climax and Steve wails over the top of it all. It's interesting that these guys and Def Leppard have been touring together, as they both helped create the Blueprint for Arena Rock and one of the pillars of that genre is an uncluttered and showy attitude for the drums. It was Mutt Lange who pointed out that all of the intricate fills and bollocks of Prog as Rock as it was coming out of the '70s would get entirely lost in the massiveness of the sheds that bands were now playing. The idea was to keep the drums simple and powerful. It became important to make sure that the drums kept everyone moving more than keeping them impressed with the fireworks. Leave that for the...well...the actual fireworks. I love it when people find out what a badass Smith is behind the kit because it shows them what self-control and discipline will do for a song. Check out the below video to see what the dude is capable of when he's running with the weights off.

Monster.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJRxyYpNGI>

The Bass Dept: Ross Valory was the bassist for the band from its inception until the *Raised On Radio* record. His role in the live band, from that album on, was taken over by Randy Jackson of American Idol fame. Useless facts abound. Russ has a little secret though; he strings his four-string bass with the bottom strings of a FIVE string bass pack. This means that he can get the low reach of a five string with the usability and ease-of-operation of a four string! Music nerds REJOICE! What it means to the rest of us is that Ol' Russ is a badass and this track is an exquisite example. The "bom-bom-boms" of the verses just riding away with Smith, the climb into the chorus, and THEN...the DOPENESS of the choruses!?! Come on. He's all-over the place. SO GOOD! In a lesser-bassist's hands, this entire song could've been pretty bloody mundane, but Ross gives it a pulse, counter-melody jam, meets up with the drums for the hits and punches, weaves around the vocal melody. Ridiculous. I mean, just go back and listen to his entry with the big hits under the vocal. If he phoned it in from that point on you might forgive it! He goes hard in the paint for the whole song and brings it all to life. I have such an affection for the bass and for bassists; Ross does an epic job on this jam. And on all of the parts he constructed for the band. Such personality and personal choices. Awesomesauce.

The Ivories: The original keyboard part had been written and recorded on a [Mellotron](#). This instrument is renowned for being finicky and a total prima donna in the studio. Greg's was no different. In the final recording stages, it was decided to double the Mellotron part with Rollie's more traditional sounding B3. The resulting texture is so unique. Another perfect accident. Upon the arrival of Cain, the keys become more important and more of a lead texture than the traditional role they played when Greg was playing with them. Organ was replaced by synths, and the rest is history. This song is one of the last to still hold on to the vestigial Classic Rock feel of the old Journey. The '80s, and the arenas, awaited. I do greatly enjoy the "weeeeeeeaaaaahm" wind-ups on the organ as it rolls into the choruses. YOU can't pull that off NEARLY as successfully on a Yamaha DX-7, I'll tell you THAT for free!

GEETARZ! Neal Schon has said that he joined Santana at 15 only after turning down Derek And The Dominoes offer to join them instead. Did I mention that he was 15-YEARS-OLD when he joined Santana! 15! Wtf. That is absolutely absurd. There is definitely a simplification of his playing as the band transforms from its '70s iteration into the behemoth of the '80s Rock Machine it became. Of this there is no doubt. However, Neal still finds interesting voicings for the chords that he chooses and, lest we forget, one of the GREATEST achievements of the Arena Rock Era was to make

wankingly amazing guitar solos a mandatory thing. And Neal can wank with the best of them. The buzz-saw sound of the verse guitars gives way to the soaring, delayed, flying-like-an-eagle-through-the-burned-umber-skies-of-some-perfect-'80s-TV-show-chase-scene, texture of the lead. Man, it must be fucking AWESOME to get to play these things loud as a bastard through a HUGE PA night after night. Kudos, Schon, you did good. A cool little trick is the variation of the chords that he plays in the stops at the 1:50 mark, more than a little Alex Lifeson/Eddie Van Halen on display. And then, a full minute of lead and smashy chords to take us through to the end. A perfect construction. WANK AWAY GUITAR GOD!

That Voice: What can one say about Stephen Ray Perry? Not much need be said, actually, if you just listen to him sing. When he briefly took over as singer for the band, Schon put them all into vocal lessons to learn how to harmonize with each other as perfectly as they could. Brilliant idea. And it shows on this one. That intro!?! Yup. Nothing to say. And then we're in. Using his lower register to invite us into the story of this chick who is up for ANYTHING, Steve lays the verse out beautifully and then, in a moment, turns on a dime and climbs up through the pre-chorus into the stacks of the chorus again. The "Hold tight" bit?!?! Supreme. And then, how could you NOT sing along to the "Any way you want it"?! Once again, perfection. Stephen does a LITTLE showing off during the Middle 8 but saves the BIG guns for the last 20 seconds of the song as he holds those massive notes over the top of Neal's solo and the band bringing it all to a conclusion. One of the greatest voices in popular music. Hands down. When you're done listening to this one, just crack up "[Separate Ways](#)" and don't think...JUST LISTEN! This song is such a jam! It moves from section to section with intention and the manipulation is so seamless that you don't notice ANY of what's happening. Everyone is aiming for the same goal and that is to get you and the other 50,000 bums out of their seats, lighters held high, swaying, turning to the person next to you and singing along with them...shit-eating grin on face. Victory over the troubles of the day and a celebration of THAT MOMENT. This is what music was intended for. Put away the fucking slide-rules and scientific calculators, stop trying to work out what music is all about, and just enjoy it. You and your mates. From your local Enormodome to the tiniest of karaoke bars, doesn't matter, these melodies carry the day every time. And voices like Steve's carry us along with them. I'm so bummed I didn't get to see them live at the peak of their powers. Must've been fucking magnificent.

<https://soundcloud.com/theklossessions/fhf-any-way-u-want-it>

And "Any Way You Want It" is the first hint we get of the future that Journey will have.

Right now, wherever you are, put on Journey's Greatest Hits, stash your musical snobbery somewhere, and just enjoy what a band can accomplish when they put their minds to it. You won't believe how matchless their execution of the Journey Prime Directive was. I unabashedly love this band. I am bummed for you if you can't find a way to give in to them and their hooks. Driving the PCH, up the coast, on a sunny afternoon, with that album blasting is sublime. I recommend it to anyone.

Just do it.

Until the next one.

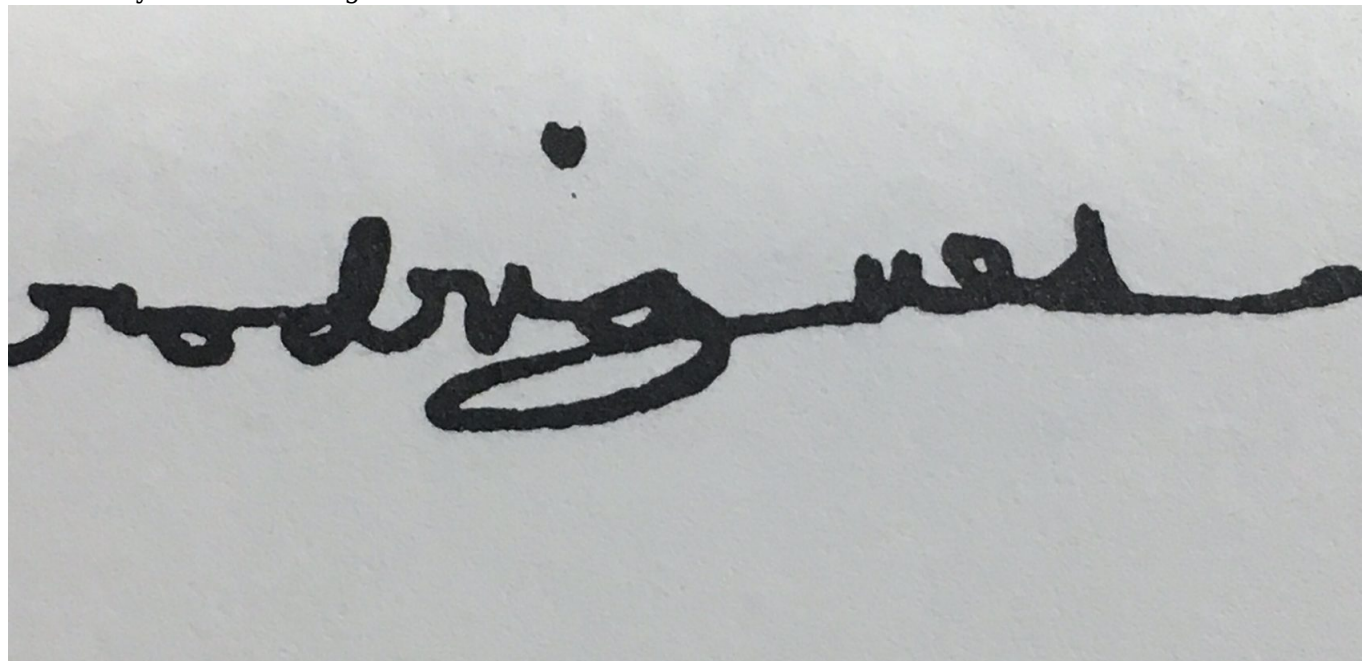
cjh

PS - You can find me on [IG](#), [Facebook](#), and [here](#) if you want any info about The Sessions and where to catch me live.

Don't Call Them Q-Tips

[Featured](#)

Written by Charles Rodrigues



The Florida Audio Expo

[Featured](#)

Written by Bill Leebens



I lived on the Gulf coast of Florida for 15 years, and even worked for an audio manufacturer there--- VAC, in Sarasota. In spite of that---or perhaps because of that---when I first heard of the plan to produce the [Florida Audio Expo](#) in Tampa, I was skeptical of the Gulf coast's ability to support an audio show.

Well, I was wrong. I underestimated the drive and abilities of the organizers, Bart Andeer, Mike Bovaird, AJ, and John Chait. Bart runs [Resolution Acoustics](#) and is head of the Tampa Bay-area [Suncoast Audiophile Society](#); Mike is a dealer, with [Suncoast Audio](#) in Sarasota; AJ--Ammar Jadusingh---is a speaker designer and builder, with [Soundfield Audio](#); John Chait is a local audiophile who belongs to both the Suncoast and Sarasota societies. Props must also be given to the PR efforts of the ever-energetic Sue Toscano, joined by Angela Speziale. Both have been around the audio biz for a good while.

Truth be told, I also underestimated the appeal of Florida in February, having become inured to that factor due to my many years in the area. Gulf-coast Florida generally has about one month out of the year when the weather is, to me, absolutely perfect: humidity is low, temps are moderate, and there is a breeze from the Gulf. The show was fortunate to be scheduled during that perfect period, and the contrast for polar vortex refugees couldn't have been greater. I left Denver at -6 deg F (-21 C), and spent 2 hours at the gate waiting for fuel to unfreeze so the plane could be fueled up. How on

earth---?

At any rate, the weekend of the show saw daytime temperatures in the low 80s F, night time temps in the 60s. Aside from brief periods of overcast, the sun was shining the entire weekend. It was pretty damn spectacular---moreso (and I say this without any maliciousness) than the venue, which was after all, an Embassy Suites. It was clean and spacious with (wonder of wonder!) elevators that worked flawlessly all weekend, and a staff that was unfailingly friendly and willing to help, in marked contrast to staff at many other venues. Don't get me wrong: the hotel was fine, just not fancy-schmancy. Anyway, fanciness would've probably inhibited the amazingly upbeat vibe of the show. Having run an audio show at the Waldorf Astoria in NYC, I can tell you that such a museum-like venue can be a bit of a buzzkill.

The show started bright and early on Friday the 8th at 10 AM. Most shows are light until mid-afternoon on Fridays; the show was full of folks from the outset, and praise be, not just old duffs like me. There were twenty-somethings, teens, families with kids. The women I saw were, without exception, with a male--- but that's nearly always the case at US shows. The only US shows where I've seen unaccompanied females have been headphone displays such as Can Jam. But: there were women, far more than usual at US audio shows. And to be perfectly sexist, I'd forgotten something about Tampa: many of the women were distractingly, spectacularly lovely. And that's all I'm gonna say about that.

>ahem<

Anyway: There were the usually big-manufacturer regulars like Levinson and JBL; the longtime small manufacturer show regulars like Von Schweikert, VAC, Audio Note, Classic Audio, and Atma-Sphere; and some totally unexpected oddballs like the Western Electric-based gear made by Vu Hoang at [Deja Vu Audio](#). It was a good mix: enough whimsical stuff to maintain interest without inducing eye-rolling disgust. There was also the requisite "what the hell was THAT?" entry, which I'll show you in a bit.

One of the highlights in the big room of Marietta, Georgia, dealer The Audio Company featuring VAC and Von Schweikert gear was The Mikey Show: Michael Fremer put his encyclopedic knowledge of music and vinyl to good use by playing alternate pressings and remasterings to a rapt crowd twice a day. Some of the differences were truly startling; one of my local friends who had been disappointed in the sound of an earlier visit to the room came back, and I pointed out that one of the hazards of really good gear is that it reveals the imperfections of mediocre recordings and pressings. After Mikey's demos, my friend *got it*.

At any rate: on with the show.

I wasn't the only one surprised by this show: plenty of exhibitors were pleasantly surprised, and vowed to be back. It was a very pleasant experience---and I can't say that about all shows.

As always, photography in unlit/underlit hotel rooms is challenging, especially when full Florida sun breaks in. My apologies for somehow missing photos of a few rooms in spite of a fairly manageable size: the Antal Audio/ Adirondack audio room had a very nice system with Triangle speakers and some really promising and reasonably-priced tube amps from Tsakiridis in Greece; Vanatoo showed a new, larger speaker that continues the company's tradition of astounding value and sound in compact speakers; and House of Stereo had a nice system with the small TADs. Mea culpa, and you can see the exhibitor listing [here](#).

See you next year!

June Millington, Part 1

[The Copper Interview](#)

Written by John Seetoo



Before the Runaways, before the Go-Go's, before the Bangles - there was Fanny. David Bowie was quoted in a 1999 *Rolling Stone* interview about Fanny: "They're as important as anyone who's ever been, ever." Fanny was led by the sisters June and Jean Millington, on guitar and bass, respectively. They defied gender stereotypes with sophisticated musical virtuosity, great songwriting, passionate singing, and a ferocious, kick ass, no-holds-barred attitude on stage.

After four Fanny albums, June Millington left the band and became a leading producer and artist in the Women's Music genre, working with Holly Near, Cris Williamson, and other notables. She also founded the Institute for Musical Arts in Goshen, MA. A nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching professional performance and recording techniques to young girls and teens interested in music, IMA also houses a full-fledged recording studio.

June, Jean, and Jean's son Lee Madeloni recorded *Play Like a Girl* several years ago, which signaled the Millington sisters' return to original rock music. Their latest release harkens back to their roots with Brie Darling (nee Brandt), who played drums with them as teens in The Svelts, and who sang with and played drums with Fanny for one album, a hit single, (Jean's, "Butter Boy" - about David Bowie) and a later tour. The album is *Fanny Walked the Earth*, and features some surprising guest appearances that pay tribute to Fanny's legacy as well as sets the stage for new future music.

June graciously took the time to share some of her unique producing and performing insights and experiences for **Copper**.

J.S.: Popular music has had a number of noteworthy sibling band partnerships: Brian, Dennis, and Carl Wilson in The Beach Boys, Eddie and Alex Van Halen, Gregg and Duane Allman, Ray and Dave Davies of the Kinks, Angus and Malcolm Young in AC/DC, Maurice and Verdine White in Earth, Wind & Fire, Noel and Liam Gallagher of Oasis, and most recently, Caleb, Jared, Nathan, and Matthew Followill of Kings of Leon. What do you think are the elements of a sibling musical partnership that differs from others? As you and Jean Millington Adamian have been playing together since the beginning, back when you both still lived in the Philippines, which one from the list do you think

resembles your relationship, or is there one unlisted that is a more accurate comparison?

J.M.: I have to acquaint myself with the full list of siblings you noted, but my guess is the fact that we were girls, and then women growing up together, would be a different experience from the boys'. Music not only opened us up to the world, in a way it shielded us. We felt special, and could now more or less jump over the moat of (mostly) racism that was already evident and was erected by society to keep us in an inferior mode. We didn't know why, but we could sure feel it. Heck, when we did pop music off the radio, we were invincible. It was a great shield, all the way from America!

As girls, we huddled in front of the radio (transistor! brand-new technology!) in Manila and found great solace in learning songs together, feeling the thrill as music goes through you - not to mention the healing qualities intrinsic in doing music - and we got applause from members of the family. They always asked us to play after dinners, at the beach, and at other gatherings, and got such a kick out of our singing and playing (perfectly) songs like "Island in the Sun" and "Yellow Bird." It was a fantastic feeling!

As we got older, started a band, and eventually moved into the Fanny realm, we created our own, shall we say, holographic frame that we stepped into. It was hard work, but it was definitely a type of freedom. Later, we had to learn to step out of that frame and become human beings - with no hype, etc. - and that was hard work, as well.

It's hard for me to believe that boys have as hard a time pushing their way forward; bravado is expected of them and girls generally are required to hang back. There are still prejudices against women and girls playing in the genre of rock and roll - that stance is, to many people, still in the male domain. So we definitely had to deal with that stereotype. Actually, I hated being forced to challenge the guys, and so many of them felt and accepted that as a position, resenting us along the way. (The better players, like Skunk Baxter, Lowell George, Steve Love, Johnny Winter, Jeff Beck, Terry Kath, and John Hall, never felt that way - a relief, believe me.) We just wanted to do music, make some friends, and have a good time!

J.S.: *Your release of **Fanny Walked the Earth** not only comes full circle for you, Jean, and Fanny after nearly 50 years, but officially reunites you with Brie Darling, who was your drummer back in your 1960s high school band, The Svelts, and for a Fanny tour in the mid-1970s. So you three were not only a pioneering all female rock band, but an all female Asian-American/Filipina rock band! Were you all thinking, even in the back of your minds, about your place in history as you were writing and producing the new songs, or was this an afterthought realization, and did that perspective have a bearing on your artistic decisions?*

[June Millington notes: Brie Howard Darling was in the band from summer '66 to beginning of summer '67. She quit and rejoined off-and-on after getting married, and played with us even while pregnant, quite a feat! That was late '67/into '68, and then she had the baby and we re-teamed up with Alice (de Buhr) and Addie (Clement) as Wild Honey; that ending up being the band that got the record deal with Richard (Perry) and Reprise. The Fanny tour we played on to back "Butter Boy" was late Spring into summer 1975.]

J.M.: *Fanny Walked the Earth* was a fluke in that there was a tribute concert for me in early 2016 in Northampton - the area where I live and work with IMA - and many musicians were involved. Jean and Brie came out to be part of it, and as we rehearsed we realized it felt so good, like we were 17 again! Realizing we were all 3 Filipina-American was not a thing for us when we were teenagers; there was no space for that. We had to prove we could play like guys, and that was it. Fortunately,

we so enjoyed doing the music, so liberating!

When we realized we would love to play together more, then we self-recognized the package: older women who could totally slam (with a track record), and Asian-American at that. We realized how proud we were, moreover, to be Filipina-American, and wanted to bring that into the public's consciousness. We realized that would be a big statement, and wanted to be a part of that societal force. Our material was not influenced by that, however - we wrote whatever we wanted, and let it all go. Like we did when we were in our teens and early-20s!

J.S.: *When you and I spoke in the past, you mentioned some of the Filipino music influence creeping into a few of your rhythms and phrasing choices, like playing faux gamelan sounds on guitar for songs from your solo record, **Heartsong**, in particular, the song "Coconut Mentality". Apart from your record with Jean, **Ticket to Wonderful**, which had some Hawaiian music coloring, is this something you may return to again, especially now that you have a Filipina band? Does Brie have similar roots as you and Jean in Filipino culture, and might this emerge in lyrics of future songs, if not overtly in the music for a future follow up **Fanny Walked the Earth** record?*

J.M.: Brie's mother is Filipina and dad is Anglo-American, exactly like me and Jean, but she did not grow up in the Philippines. So, we did have parallel experiences growing up (again, think racism), but not exactly the same. There's nothing like eating the food, hearing the language, understanding the cultural norms...a lot of them non-verbal. As far as writing songs with lyrics/music reflecting the Filipino/Asian-American experience, it's possible but I can't really say. That's a good idea on the face of it! But given Jean's stroke, which just happened this last January (2018), doing a follow-up album is seriously on hold. I'm continuing with turning my autobiography, *Land of a Thousand Bridges*, into an audiobook here at IMA, and writing Book II, which starts in 1975 when rock 'n roll overlapped with feminism, a most critical time. Then came disco, and AIDS, my producing albums, co-founding IMA, working and recording again with Jean...it's a big piece, to which I'm devoting a bulk of my time. I'm booked for the rest of my life!

J.S.: *You had some interesting guest appearances from members of the Go-Gos, Runaways, and the Bangles, as well as from Patti Quatro, who also played in Fanny during the 1970s. You have mentioned in other interviews that the guest appearances were mostly due to Brie's invitations. Pairing veterans with younger guest stars seems to be a common marketing trend across music genres, from blues (John Lee Hooker, B.B. King), classic rock (Santana, America, Billy Gibbons), country (Roy Orbison, Loretta Lynn), R&B (Isley Brothers), and Hip Hop (LL Cool J), being just a few examples. Are you very cognizant of your musical legacy, and are there any other artists whom you would welcome in the future for guest appearances on your recordings?*

J.M.: That's a good question, but as of yet I don't think that way because I never have the budget for it. Were I to daydream about pairing with other guest artists, I think I'd start with Bonnie Raitt - that's a natural. Then Skunk Baxter, and I would definitely dream of doing some music with Ruby Ibarra.

J.S.: *In addition to a love of harmonies and a very specific vision and disciplined pre-production work ethic when in the studio, you and Brian Wilson are also both deaf in one ear from an early age, yet have produced wonderful records. In June Millington's case, how do you approach mixing? Do you go for a good mono balance first, then tell an engineer where you want stereo placement and get feedback from trusted colleagues, or is there another methodology that you use?*

J.M.: I can hear conceptual stereo, in that I know where things are placed. I also have intuitive hearing in my left ear, but it's also important to know that changes in the stereo field presents to me

as changes in volume. I'm very aware of that and, armed with knowledge from so many years in the studio, I am armed with that knowledge and use it to the utmost. I'm alert to nuances, and to pitch (read, pitch anomalies), and have the type of brain wiring (no sound or equilibrium on one side) that allows me to edit mentally, arrange and re-arrange things in my head, and "see" music as a 3-dimensional field as represented by sound reproduction. In addition, I'm tuned in to the "colors" of chords and voicings. All that, along with knowledge of quite a bit of theory, allows me to get a lot done.

Most importantly, I work with an engineer whom I trust implicitly and let them go for it. Strictly speaking, that's in the realm of pre-production. Choose who you want to work with, and make decisions. If he or she was also involved in the tracking and overdubs (my preference), I can wait quite a while before making suggestions. I enjoy that process, of trusting the person I'm working with, of being surprised by the talent, because good engineers always come up with something super-interesting. When they're good, they're colossal. [Good examples: Geoff Emerick, Leslie Ann Jones, John Cuniberti, Roma Baran, Leanne Ungar, Lee Madeloni].

J.S.: *You stress the importance of pre-production when producing records, and yet you also love jam sessions and improvising. Now that you have your own professional recording studio at IMA, have you ever recorded anything in a stream of consciousness improvisational mindset and wound up keeping the tracks because the inspiration could never be replicated?*

J.M.: The trick is to balance all of the above. If you hear some new, unexpected thing happening, tape it - try to incorporate it. You never know - there's got to be a willingness to even check out the merest bit of improv, or going off the chart. The only issue is time: if you got the time, and the money, go for it! Especially in the digital realm, there's always Save and Save As. That really gives you a lot of freedom, and compared to the days of tape, where it was sometimes difficult to find other takes, I'm shocked by how much. Of course, you sacrifice some in the sound quality (Right! Tape is deeper and warmer...) but it really is all in the balance. Make decisions and go for it.

As far as recording entirely in "stream of consciousness improvisational mindset" mode, I would say no, in my case. I like to have a plan, and charts. But that happens in overdubs, definitely. That's where I find that type of freedom. But then, it's set up that way. You gotta have good players to play simply, because that's kinda more dangerous in terms of execution (and we all wanna show that we can play!), but it opens up all the spaces where other things can happen. I love that. But you gotta have your hands on the reins:))

J.S.: *You have mentioned in other interviews about how the Women's Music World was not used to drums and rock-and-roll when you started your involvement in the field after leaving Fanny. The energy of heavy rock seemed to be the antithesis of the quiet, emotional communication that the singer-songwriter genre tried to convey in the 1970s. I remember a concert you played with Cris Williamson at the Beacon Theater in NYC where you killed it with an amazing solo. I think the song was "When Anger Takes The Wheel". Cris Williamson seemed to be almost apologetic that the band was rocking so hard with you stepping forward! Was this a big transition and leap for you musically? Did you have to develop a wider and different musical vocabulary and frame of reference in order to work with musicians in women's music after spending so many years with Fanny on a major label?*

J.M.: Yes, I indeed had to make many adjustments in working within the realm of women's music, which began with Cris asking me to play on *The Changer and the Changed* in '75. So much about it, I loved: the inclusiveness on a number of levels, the spiritual aspects, the friendships themselves ongoing for many years and many of them enduring. These are real connections.

But there were dissonances, too - like being asked to turn down (especially when I established myself as an artist/songwriter in that genre), which grew more frequent when Jean played with me later! The one that really had my head kinda spinning was when Cris let me play drums (she pretty much let me do anything I wanted, which was very cool), and some objected to my playing a "male" instrument. That was just an ill-informed prejudice, which I conveniently ignored.

But let's not forget that I've written many ballads and quiet, more spiritually-inclined songs as well: "You've Got a Home", "Keep Me Anymore", "Rosarita", "Calling Your Name (to the Stars)", "All the Children"...songs that I hold close, and that continue to nourish me.

***J.S.: Guitar Player** magazine included you in an article about 50 of the most overlooked guitarists in music history and said you were so good you should have had the 'female' qualifier before 'guitarist' removed. Seeing the previous question from the other end of the telescope, there are women who are taking the technical skill level on guitar to unheard of heights that shred gender differences. Players like Kaki King, Vicki Genfan, and someone who reminds me a lot of you in terms of being an Asian-American guitar trailblazer - math rock whiz Yvette Young of Covet. Especially since you say you came to the blues later in your musical development, do you feel that the drive towards technical virtuosity and the ability to communicate emotionally through one's instrument can be at odds? Can a successful blend between the two be made, and how have you tried to accomplish this?*

J.M.: Technical virtuosity is something that always eluded me. I'm one of those (in any field) who came up from behind. I just kept working, driven by my passion and the fact that I recognized that music afforded me, in this life, the ultimate freedom. In my view, the only thing that could keep one from the ability to communicate emotionally via an instrument is that you chose the wrong one (or, misheard the "signals" coming from a variety of instruments, all of which I think have essential souls and sing to us, whether being played or not).

All instruments are ready to sing, to fly. Whether you are the key that fits into the lock is a combination of luck and, quite frankly, grit. The ability to keep going. I'm just lucky in that I instantly knew that the guitar was for me, and vice versa. So I was never gonna give up.

Yvette Young is a fascinating study and someone whose talent and output is impossible not to admire. I'm happy to be mentioned in the same sentence with her as a trailblazer.

[John Seetoo's interview with June Millington will continue in Copper #80. Header photograph is by Linda Wolf, and our thanks to her for its usage.---Ed.]

Fall

[Parting Shot](#)

Taken by Rich Isaacs



