



SPRING 2014

**THE MAKINGS OF  
AN SU IDOL**

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**SYNCHRONICE: EDM'S  
DYNAMIC DUO**

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**INSIDE THE  
SCHINE UNDERGROUND**

**BLINK-182 • PARAMORE • SKRILLEX • CHANCE THE RAPPER • BOYZ II MEN • AFROMAN  
• THE AVETT BROTHERS • ELLIE GOULDING • CLEAN BANDIT • GRIMES • INDO •  
THE CHAINSMOKERS • ALEX BENIS • WILD CHILD • BRING ME THE HORIZON**

Cover photo by Adam Gendler  
Cover photo of Austin Holmes,  
winner of SU Idol, hosted by The Mandarins and  
the SU Traditions Commission.

- 01** **FEELING THIS**  
BLINK-182
- 02** **TOP NOTCH**  
MANCHESTER ORCHESTRA
- 03** **EASY EASY**  
KING KRULE
- 04** **AIN'T IT FUN**  
PARAMORE
- 05** **PEOPLE SAY**  
PORTUGAL. THE MAN
- 06** **FANCY FOOTWORK**  
CHROMEO
- 07** **COAST IS CLEAR**  
SKRILLEX + CHANCE THE RAPPER
- 08** **PRAY**  
SZA
- 09** **MOTOWN PHILLY**  
BOYZ II MEN
- 10** **CRAZY RAP**  
AFROMAN
- 11** **BRING YOUR LOVE TO ME**  
THE AVETT BROTHERS

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**WE ASKED:**  
WHAT'S IN YOUR CUP THIS SUMMER?

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The saddest time of the year in Syracuse is inarguably mid-March. Ambiguous weather and the threat of yet another winter storm drive us indoors, tucked under blankets or into the humid, beer-stained bowels of the nearest bar. Consistently gray skies dictate our moods. It's an ugly meteorological puberty; it'll be 46 degrees and clear outside one day, and negative two with a wind chill the next. I read somewhere that Syracuse gets about 100 sunny days a year, which I contend must be an optimistic estimate.

To get through the bleak Syracuse winter and make it to the finish line, the fleeting, two-week block of sunny, I-can't-believe-it's-spring weather encompassing Mayfest and finals week, you must persevere. But how? To each their own—I'm certainly not judging if your way of coping is binge-watching six seasons of *Futurama* or self-medicating with too much liquor, late-night Zonies, and day-after regret.

But for me, it's always been music.

There's something therapeutic about going to a show at the Westcott Community Center on a frozen February night and sing-screaming your favorite songs with the 50 sweaty strangers you're there with. There's something calming about listening to the same songs every day on your blustery walk home (I recommend The Hold Steady's *Boys and Girls in America* for your winter commute). There's something familiar about escaping the cold at Thursday night house shows in a friend's basement.

From Earth Crisis to Ra Ra Riot, Syracuse's musical résumé is nothing less than impressive. Going to shows, writing stories, and connecting with people in Central New York over the past four years has taught me the valuable lesson of not writing Syracuse off as just another post-industrial, rust-belt city, a place to waste four years on the Hill. And I encourage anyone who plans to stick around for another year of school (or three) to discover something off the SU Hill and within the city of Syracuse that resonates with you—music-related or not.

Whatever your means, we're all nearing a brighter, warmer end, with graduation and break weeks away. Instead of using music to deal with the weather, I urge you to use it to celebrate—whether at Mayfest, at your graduation party, or on your way home from Syracuse for the summer. Before you check out for the summer, take a look at our profile on Marcus Neal, a graduating musician who has triumphed against all odds, on page 28. On page 32, get a closer look at our cover model Austin Holmes, who won 2013's SU Idol competition and will soon be celebrating his debut EP.

It's been an honor serving as editor of *20 Watts* this year. Thanks for reading and for supporting our magazine and Syracuse-area music. Keep Syracuse weird.

Mary C. Kuth





# SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS: THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND (1969-2014) BY JOEY COSCO

you love the Allman Brothers. Alongside southern guys in Lynyrd Skynyrd and the like, the group's multiple drummers, bluesy guitar licks and soulful vocals helped shape a movement.

Marrying blues and rock n roll was definitely nothing new, even in 1969 when the Allman Brothers Band first formed. But at the end of a decade where rock music poured out of Britain and California often sounding more psychedelic than southern, the Allmans' commercial success, popularity and talent restored a sort of legitimacy to the classic American rock band, paving the way for other southern bands to fuse with blues.

But as important as laying down the roots of a genre is, it means nothing if your band can't play. Thankfully the Allman Brothers Band can rock with the best of the deep south, and they've done so for a long time. From the classic rocker "Ramblin' Man" [Editor's note: See our 20 Watts Approved Roadtrip Playlist on page 17] to the soulful 90s song "Seven Turns," the brothers carved a deep spot into pop music with their approachable version of what could easily be an isolating genre. Perhaps most impressively, The Allman Brothers Band managed to do this well through the MTV era and into the YouTube era, essentially leading the charge for others to follow.

While it's sad for me to think 2015 will be Allman-less, it's important to remember what it actually means to create a movement. The Allman Bros' style of southern rock lives on not only in *Guitar Hero* games. From now on, we'll have to turn to groups like Kings of Leon and Shinedown for a southern rock fix, which certainly isn't a bad thing. It's hard to mess something up when the foundation was laid in part by an Allman or two.

Early in 2014, two members of storied southern rock band The Allman Brothers Band announced they planned to leave the group at the end of the year. Soon after, longtime frontman and founding member Gregg Allman announced the band would cease touring after his band members leave.

For some unknown reason, southern rock has always struck a twangy chord with me. This makes the latest Allman Brothers news especially sad, and also reminded me of a simpler time when I knew virtually nothing about real southern rock.

I vividly remember talking music with my banjoist uncle when I was but a naïve preteen. "Lynyrd Skynyrd is obviously the best southern rock band of all time," I said. Of course they were. Their song "Free Bird" was the hardest song in the main setlist for *Guitar Hero 2*! They were gods of southern rock. "Not so," Uncle Bart said. His banjo seemed to twang while he talked. "Listen to The Allman Brothers Band." He said their use of blues techniques and instrumentation are really what set them apart, and may very well have been what brought such popularity to southern rock. I humored him, even though TABB's song "Jessica" was only moderately difficult on *Guitar Hero 2*.

The thing is, Uncle Bart was right. The Allman Brothers Band may truly be the greatest southern rock band of all time. Of course, "greatest of all time" is a hard argument to ever make soundly, but how about this: If you love southern rock,



**LIVE AT  
FILLMORE EAST**  
(1971)



**DREAMS**  
(1989)



**BROTHERS  
AND SISTERS**  
(1973)

**20 WATTS-APPROVED ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND ALBUMS**





# ELECTRIC GENES

THESE JERSEY BROTHERS  
CARRY ELECTRONIC  
MUSIC IN THEIR DNA.

BY AUDREY MORGAN  
PHOTO BY CHRIS LAZZARRO

**James Saulsky, a senior advertising and political science dual major and half of electronic music duo Synchronice,** wants you to know that he and his brother do it all. James and Will Saulsky, New Jersey natives

and brothers, have been DJing and producing electronic sounds from dubstep to house since they were freshmen. After three years, 72,157 Facebook likes, and nearly 5,000 Twitter followers, Synchronice is

inspiring other up-and-comers and playing shows as far away as San Francisco—on school nights, no less. With a remix of AYER's song "Young" and a music video with SU's Loud and Clear in the works, Synchronice fans have a lot to be excited about. *20 Watts* sat down with James to talk about the duo's roots, the brothers' relationship, and their plans for the future.

**Q** Is there a particular style of music you gravitate toward when producing? What are you exploring currently?

**JS** We started to get a lot of recognition for our heavy dubstep stuff. We had a release on Firepower Records, which is owned by Datsik—that went to number one on Beatport, the dubstep charts—so a lot of people know us for that. But we're making a switch away from the heavier side—we kind of went as heavy as we want to go. Now we're going back into songwriting and we want to focus more on melodic elements and a solid song structure.

**Q** What made you want to pursue music production outside of school?

**JS** It started off as something that we were just doing for fun. Then, during my freshman year, blogs started to post our music and we got some recognition. It felt good to have people liking our music, so we kept releasing. We got signed to a label and we were like, "Okay, this is a little more serious." And it just kept

growing. [But] you almost don't want to put too much into it because the music industry is volatile—it's really risky to do music full time when you don't have that much going on. It went from this crazy idea to more of an actual possibility.

**Q** How has your musical collaboration affected your relationship with your brother?

**JS** It's awesome. I can't imagine doing music with anyone other than a sibling because it requires so much interaction and you have to be brutally honest. No matter how much crap we go through, at the end of the day we're still family. We see each other all the time, and my parents have been super supportive—they come from musical backgrounds, so it's awesome. They're really into it and I think it's brought us all together.

**Q** What are your plans for Synchronice after graduation?

**JS** We'll see. What would've been ideal is if we got booked onto a tour or something and we knew for sure we'd be making enough to justifiably go into music full time. I don't think that's going to happen, so for now, we have a couple more remixes to put out, and then we're working on original music with guitars and singing that's more accessible. The plan is to pitch that to some bigger labels and booking agencies and say, "So this is what we've done in the past—something very electronic, very niche." If that got picked up, that'd be fantastic.





# THE FIVE

BY SADÉ SPENCE

## ONE // GRIMES

**Who:** An eclectic Canadian singer whose falsettos have an ethereal presence.

**Sounds Like:** Eerie, enchanting vocals and melodious pop tracks. Perfect for driving, a day at the beach, or the soundtrack to your summer festival experience.

**Fun Fact:** She will be performing at New York City's Governors Ball and is headlining Pitchfork festival in Chicago this summer.

**See Also:** Crystal Castles, Purity Ring.

## TWO // HAIM

**Who:** An all-American band of sisters who are taking music back to the good ol' days.

**Sounds Like:** They've combined their soulful 90s pop vibes with the likes of Ace of Base and are creating a genre all their own.

**Fun Fact:** They were introduced to music as kids when the whole family formed a cover band called Rockinhaim.

**See Also:** Fleetwood Mac, Ingrid Michaelson.

## THREE // AUGUST ALSINA

**Who:** An R&B singer from New Orleans who recently signed with Def Jam Recordings.

**Sounds Like:** Fresh, soulful, and honest, August's hardships play out in his piercing lyrics and demanding beat.

**Fun Fact:** He got his start by posting homemade cover videos to YouTube.

**See Also:** Trey Songz, Rico Love, Bobby V.

## FOUR // TORI KELLY

**Who:** A 20-year-old singer-songwriter from California, Tori first won over audiences via the Internet when she was just 14.

**Sounds Like:** A fun mix of pop and R&B, Tori's mature voice moves through you like a warm wind.

**Fun Fact:** She wrote, produced, mixed, and self-released her debut album *Handmade Songs*.

**See Also:** Ariana Grande.

## FIVE // 5 SECONDS OF SUMMER

**Who:** An Australian pop-rock band that formed in December 2011 and has since been promoted by famous boy band One Direction.

**Sounds Like:** All of your favorite 90s boy bands reunited in this perfect mix of pop, punk, and ingenuity.

**Fun Fact:** One Direction's Louis Tomlinson helped the band reach a bigger audience when he posted a link to their video saying he'd been a fan for a while.

**See Also:** One Direction, Demi Lovato.

# FOR THE RECORD BY IBET INYANG



**1 THE SOUND GARDEN**  
310 W Jefferson St., Syracuse.

**2 GORHAM BROTHERS MUSIC**  
118 Seely Road, Syracuse.

**3 FUNK 'N WAFFLES**  
727 South Crouse Ave., Syracuse.

**5 SPINN CITI**  
2034 S. Salina St., Syracuse.

**4 BOOKS AND MELODIES**  
2600 James St., Syracuse.

**6 HIONFI VINTAGE STEREO STORE**  
3649 Erie Blvd., Syracuse.

In what was probably the coolest jam session ever, independent record store owners and employees came together in 2007 to create Record Store Day their way of celebrating "nearly 1,000 independently owned record stores in the U.S. and thousands of similar stores internationally," according to the official website. Record Store Day is for those who appreciate the richness of vinyl's sound, the feel of a freshly unwrapped compact disk, and salivate at the thought of the concerts and festivals that will follow. This year, Record Store Day 2014 took place on April 19, but it's never too late to have your own Record Store Day celebration and to support local music-related businesses. Make sure you check out these Syracuse music hot spots.



You're hitting the road this summer, and no matter the destination, the music you listen to on the way will get you there faster. While streaming services and FM radio provide infinite listening options to get you through your journey, consider this list of *20 Watts*-approved cross-country road trip essentials.

**1. START ME UP**

THE ROLLING STONES

The upbeat energy the Stones bring in "Start Me Up" will kick start any road trip with verve. The sexy lyrics and Jagger's voice will get your engines revving as you take to the open road.

being on the road, all the while telling you to just keep truckin' on, like the doo-dah man...whoever that is.

**2. RAMBLIN' MAN**

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

It's impossible to listen to this classic without bouncing in your seat and vocally mimicking the whaling guitar solos. The Allman Brothers Band provides a classic, southern rock sound and inspires visions of the American landscape rolling by.

**4. PIANO MAN**

BILLY JOEL

There always comes a time when your journey on the road gets sentimental. In that case, turn to Billy Joel. "Piano Man" is sure to encourage you to throw your arms around your friends, sway back-and-forth, and partake in a spirited sing-along.

**3. TRUCKIN'**

THE GRATEFUL DEAD

If you're eight hours into your journey and you need a pick-me-up, listen to Bob Weir and the Grateful Dead rattle off misadventures of

**5. HIGHWAY 51 BLUES**

BOB DYLAN

Dylan's gritty voice, accompanied by his fast-paced, angst-ridden acoustic guitar, transforms this simple song into a dynamic and compelling force. When this song comes on, vehement steering wheel drumming is sure to ensue.



## THE ULF<sup>OF</sup> MARSHALL STREET

BY ERIN SINGLETON  
PHOTO BY ADAM GENDLER

Ulf Oesterle—call him Ulf; he's on a first-name basis with his students—is an assistant professor in the Setnor School of Music. He also owns and runs an independent record label, and as programs and produces a weekly indie-rock radio show for Syracuse's own KRock. With summer approaching—Ulf plans to hit the road with his local bands Safe, The Afro Nips, and Thoughts In Reverse for a few shows in addition to participating in the Syracuse IRONMAN competition—he took a few minutes to sit down with *20 Watts* and talk about his affinity for country music, the hardcore history of Chuck's, and college radio.

**U** So who are your go-to favorite artists that you've been listening to lately?

**ULF** Right now I've been listening to a lot of modern country acts, so people like David Nail, Thomas Rhett, Brantley Gilbert; other artists like Keith Urban and Dierks Bentley that have been around a little bit longer. In my car I still have regular broadcast radio, so I've also been into local stations like WOLF 105.1 or B104.7, modern country or pop country stations. So I've been listening to a lot of that lately, but like five years ago had you asked me anything about country, I wouldn't say anything.

**U** It's refreshing to hear that you like country up here in Syracuse! I'm a fan as well but I know it can be bashed here.

**ULF** It's funny because it's not big on campus, but outside of campus the biggest radio stations in town are the country stations. Toby Keith's at the mall, Brantley Gilbert's playing out in Turning Stone.

**U** Can you recall which artists were big during your college years? Who were those few bands everyone was listening to?

**ULF** I worked on college radio so there was a ton of stuff going on. My college years were 1995-1999, so on the air I started with a radio show that was very much like the ska-punk and punk types of bands, like Fat Wreck Chords bands. Lagwagon, Less Than Jake, early days of Blink-182; all of those were what I was starting with and playing for the college station. And then I became the RPM director, which is essentially the EDM director now, but I was playing a lot of bands like Aphex Twin, Chemical Brothers, and some absolutely made it but most were just a blink.

**U** In a broader picture, in terms of the music industry, what is your opinion on it now in comparison to your college years? How do you feel about it?

**ULF** You know, it's a different animal today. When I was in college radio, there were many more labels that had more power. There were more widespread labels, more imprints that the label had. Now we see bands having more power and are doing

things themselves; distribution has completely changed.

**U** Which live concert do you feel is one that really sticks out above all that you've attended in the past?

**ULF** One show that really stands out: Vision of Disorder. They're a Long Island hardcore band playing alongside Down Set, an LA-based hardcore band that was also kind of political and outspoken. They played at Hungry Charlie's, which now is no longer since we have Chuck's. You could always count on a Sunday hardcore, five-buck performance with black-and-white posters and the lines wrapping around. The whole scene would come together and that's one I'd remember because I had the microphone stuffed in my face when I basically jumped up on stage because Down Set brought a lot of people up on stage and I screamed along with them. That was absolutely fun.

**U** If you had to pick one underrated artist that you'd want our readers to go listen to, who would you suggest?

**ULF** I'd absolutely have to say Ben Howard. A lot of people don't know him and they should. I remember the first time I heard one of his songs and it really was that moment of, "I need to pull out an app and find out what this is." He's got 568,000 followers on Spotify, but there's still a lot of people who don't know who I'm talking about when I bring him up, and I think they should! His last record came out in 2011 and he's making some more soon; it's a far departure from hardcore. The way that he delivers and the way that he plays guitar, he's amazing.





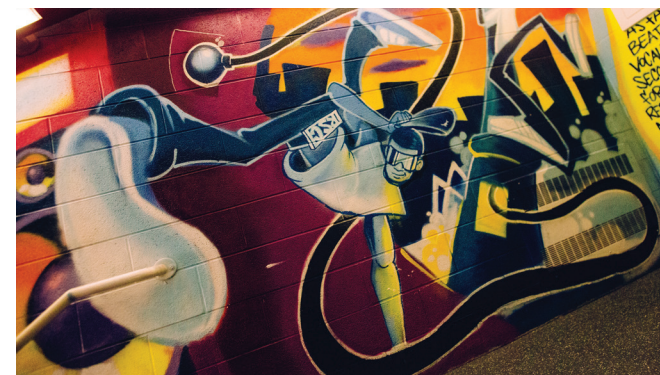
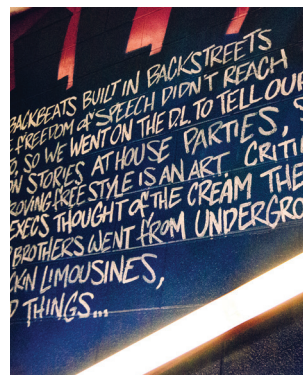
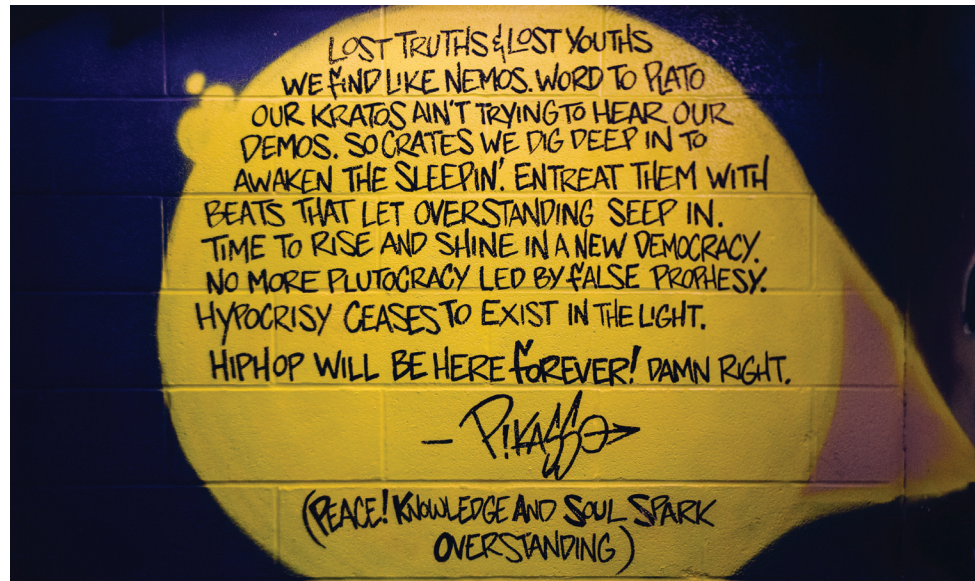
PHOTO  
ESSAY

## GRAFFITI // THE SCHINE UNDERGROUND

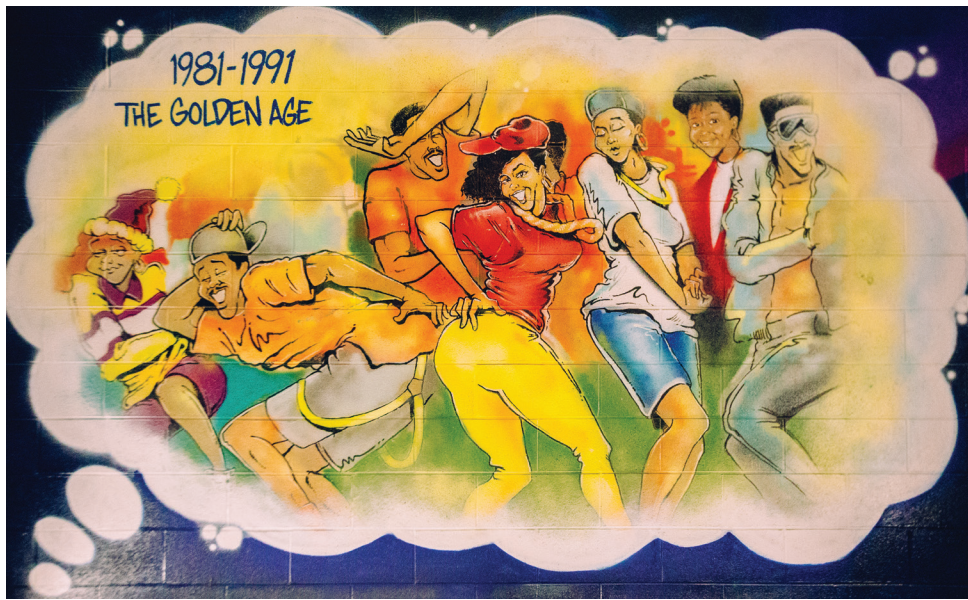
BY ADAM GENDLER

While the rest of SU slept, illustration and animation alumnus Brian Gaidry was wide awake from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. for an entire week in 2005, filling the cinderblock walls in the Schine Underground with bold graffiti. Gaidry, whose tag “P. Kasso” is still visible in his work in the Schine Underground today, started to craft his mural “Symphony in Spray” when he was a student in 1988. SU first commissioned Gaidry to turn the cold white walls into a series of murals to entice students to use the Schine Underground. After a year of painting mural during the evenings,

Gaidry had completely transformed the Underground’s stairway into a landscape of recognizable pop culture figures and urban scenes—but his work wasn’t done yet. In 2005, he finished the series in time for the Schine Center’s 20th anniversary. His visit was sponsored by SU’s Student Centers and Programming Services and the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Gaidry, whose animation work has been featured on *Saturday Night Live* and *Late Night with David Letterman*, uses his unique graffiti style to depict a topic Gaidry’s passionate about: the origin and evolution of hip-hop.







...THE AGE OF THE B-BOY. SON OF PFUNK,  
 COUSIN TO STAR CHILD & IT'S WILD  
 HOW WE'RE STILL NUMBER ONE-ONE-  
 ONE CHIEF ROCKA'. MELLE MEL & THE  
 MESSAGE TO WORLDWIDE MASSES.  
 BILLION \$ SALES & BACKSTAGE PASSES  
 TO THE REVOLUTION, BUT WE GOTTA  
 KEEP OUR CONTRIBUTION REAL,  
 LIKE BLACK STEEL IN THE HOUR OF  
 CHAOS. MERGING TOGETHER INTO AN  
 AUTONOMOUS CONGLOMERATION, WITH  
 OUR OWN STUDIOS, PRESSING FACILITIES  
 AND RADIO STATIONS. WHERE THE  
 ONLY PEOPLE GETTING PAID ARE THE ONES  
 DOING THE HIT MAKIN'. NO MORE FAKIN'  
 THE PUNK AS THE SUBSIDY OF A  
 CORPORATE PIMP...



CLASS IS IN SESSION

RAP - EVOLUTION OF SCAT INTO  
 REVOLUTION OF INSTRUMENTALS  
 LACED WITH EMCEE ESSENTIALS  
 ONE & THE SCRATCH  
 HE LYRICAL ITCH  
 SUGAR RUN-DMCN  
 'JEKYLEN-HYDIN'  
 J OF KURTIS' WIND  
 AS FAT AS DEM BOYS WITH DA  
 BEAT IN DEY BOXIN' HOP HIPPIN'  
 VOCALLY TRIP-TRIP-TRIPPIN INTO THE  
 SECOND COMING OF JAZZ AS IN CREATED  
 FOR US BY US IMITATED BUT NEVER  
 REPLICATED. VERBAL GYMNASTICS  
 MIND BOGGLING DEEJAY TACTICS OF  
 THE GRANDMASTER FLEX & FLASHES  
 OF ANCESTRAL AFRIKA BAMBAATAA...

HOSE CABINET

PEOPLE  
 WHO TRY TO  
 EXPLAIN  
 PICTURES ARE  
 USUALLY BARKIN'  
 UP THE WRONG  
 TREE!





THE 20 WATTS-APPROVED

# SUMMER FESTIVAL FASHION GUIDE

BY RIKKI SCHNEIDERMAN AND SADÉ SPENCE

It's hot, it's almost summer, and it's the most wonderful time of the year: festival season! There's a festival for everyone, whether you plan on trekking down south to Bonnaroo, or if you're considering Mayfest as the only festival you'd even think about going to. We get it—three to six days without personal space or hygiene isn't for everyone, but the festival atmosphere is one-of-a-kind. Embrace it in full with some of our suggested styles – or just go naked.

## CHICKS

### BOHEMIAN (OR BOHEIMIAN, IF YOU'RE FEELING ORANGE)

- Pick out a cute, rust-colored tank and tuck it into high-waist, tribal-print shorts. Word of caution: you are not Pocahontas. And you never will be. Keep that in mind.
- Include a lightweight kimono jacket to billow in the breeze behind you, like a grungy, drug-addled superhero.
- Throw in a few hair feathers (or hair chalk!), a fringed purse, and brown booties.
- Tote a cool fringed canteen to carry your poison.

### FLOWER CHILDREN (HIPPIE)

- Don a white or cream-colored billowy dress and strappy gold sandals, but be careful. This can turn toga/Greek goddess very quickly, so accessories are key.
- Add a flower headband or a chunky

gold necklace, and stacks on stacks of bracelets. Consider a denim jacket (if you'll be cold) or vest (if you wanna be awesome).

- For a little extra flair, paint a few daisies on your cheek. If you're into that kind of thing.
- Tote your drink (and possibly your hard drugs) in an eco-friendly denim bag full of beads and fringe and feathers. Because why not?

### HIPSTERS/UNCATEGORIZED ATTENDEES

- Grab a floral, nineties-inspired mini dress. The shorter, the better.
- Match with high socks, oxfords, and straw boater hat. The first two items can be switched out for different accessories, but the hat is a must, if only to keep you from getting sunburned.
- Sport a fanny pack flask. Do you even need a reason?

LOOK THE PART AT THE SUMMER MUSIC EVENT OF YOUR CHOICE AND THANK US LATER, YOU POSER.



## DUDES

### FRATTY FESTIVAL-GOER

- Begin with a loose, light-colored tank, with an optional flannel (unbuttoned, of course; you aren't in class).
- Funky-printed shorts, adorned with palm trees or tropical birds, will literally get you any girl you want. You're welcome.
- Finish off with a snapback, Sperrys (sigh) and sunglasses.
- Your whiskey (or UV Blue, we aren't judging too much) will fit nicely into this flask masked as a wallet. Just don't leave any actual money in there.

### GDIS (URBAN COMFORT)

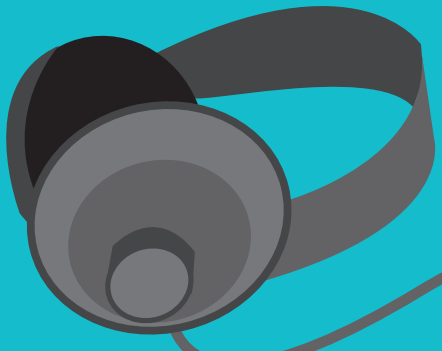
- Fitted white tee + camo shorts = man's best friend.
- Vans! Converse high-tops! Or man sandals, if you're actively trying to repel people.

- Sunglasses are the only accessory you need, my friend.
- Don't actually wear man sandals.
- Carry your beer like a man--in your hand. You can toss one of these beer koozies on if you're that scared of cops, you wuss.

### HIPSTER BOI

- Prove you're the boss of male festival fashion, starting with a floral shirt. If it looks like it's from an airport in Honolulu, you're on the right track.
- Add a straw boater hat (see above: Bohemian girl), because gendered clothing stereotypes are overrated, obvi.
- Necessity: Cutoff denim shorts ending about mid-thigh. Bonus points if you cut them yourself. DIY. So hot right now.
- Oxfords. Duh.
- Track down any flask that'll fit into a shirt pocket and bring it along. Cheers!

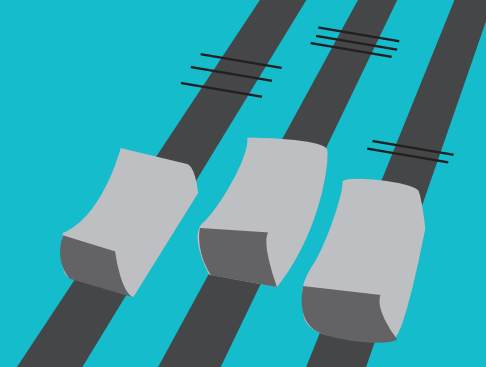




# ACE OF BASS

BY NIKKI BLAYLOCK

Senior Alex Benis builds the beats behind the songs.



**Behind every song is a team**—an artist and a producer working together, weaving lyrics with a beat to tell a story. Though artists tend to get most of the credit, producers have distinct personalities; their job is to make you fall in love with a song before you understand what the song is about. 20 Watts sat down with senior Alex Benis, a TRF student and record producer who goes by the name Cub\$, to learn what goes into the production of a song.

**Can you tell us about your first encounter with production?**

**AB** Most people don't know this about me, but I was actually a YouTube rapper in high school before I came to college. At one point I just wasn't happy rapping over beats that were already someone else's, so I decided to see if I could make my own. I bought this program called *Fruity Loops* for \$198 when I was 16, which was the best investment I've ever made. I remember not falling in love with it at first because the learning curve for that program was just incredibly hard—I'm talking like hours and hours of video tutorials and just experimenting. When I started to figure the program out and realized all the dope shit that it could do, that's when it started getting fun.

**What do you like about being a producer?**

**AB** It's all about finding new elements. We're all searching for that next big sound that no one's done yet. Whether you want

to admit it or not, music is architecture. There are certain things that need to be present for you to call something a song—just as there are certain things that buildings need for you to be able to call them buildings. For the most part though, it's up to the architect to decide what kind of building they want to make.

**Who are your favorite producers?**

**AB** I'd have to say Clams Casino by a long shot. Right now he's making music that's just years ahead of anyone else's production, [using a] really ambient mood. I love Cardo and Bangladesh too just because their sound is so unique. Bangladesh really changed the game when he and Lil Wayne dropped "A Milli."

**What does it take to make a good beat or a good song?**

**AB** What's crazy is that there just isn't any one right answer. You definitely have to get the levels right in terms of volume but as a producer you can literally do whatever you want. Look at Soulja Boy's "Crank That." That was probably the most basic beat I've ever heard in my life—and yet it was the biggest hit that year. Why? The lyrics and the dance became radio candy. Every beat has the potential to be a hit. It really ultimately depends on what the artist decides to do with it.

**How long does it take to make a beat?**

**AB** It definitely depends on the day. Sometimes I'll be playing the keys for hours, trying to get a dope melody going if I'm making something original. Setting up the instruments doesn't really take that long, though—probably like an hour. The hard part comes from mixing and EQ. When it comes to music I'm a perfectionist unfortunately, so I really take my time with it. I have one beat on a mixtape that took me like 40 hours of mixing just because the automation that went into that was ridiculous. That track almost broke my computer.

**What type of personality do you have as a producer?**

**AB** I wouldn't call myself naturally quiet, but I'm always thinking. I remember being in a lecture class last year, and having to keep a melody in my head for 45 minutes just so I wouldn't forget it. The moment that class was over, I opened up my laptop and mapped those chords out. The biggest problem is the best ideas come when you're not really expecting them.

**What are your favorite instruments?**

I think I've always had a crush on the guitar. In high school I listened to a lot of O.A.R. and Third Eye Blind when I wasn't in the mood for hip-hop, so it definitely influenced the types of samples I look for when I'm not producing something entirely

original. The joints you can make with a track recorded by The XX are just limitless. I'm guilty of sampling the same song two or three times, just to see what I can get.

**Who are some artists you work with in the industry?**

**AB** I'm currently producing mainly for Chris Miles, Skizzy Mars, and this super-dope dream-pop artist named Trippz Michaud from Connecticut. I also co-produced a single with Slade Da Monsta for San Diego artist Young Lyxx called "Hella On Me," who was able to put Early Mac on it as a feature, which was pretty huge. For those who don't know, Early Mac is based out of Detroit, and is the fourth rapper who goes off on Big Sean's "Mula" remix.

**Who do you want to work with in the future?**

Probably ScHoolBoy Q or Vinny Cha\$e because they both make music that really fits the genres I produce. I had Cha\$e's King's Landing mixtape on repeat for like two months after it came out—it was a problem. I'd be running at the YMCA for half an hour and "Coolin'" would just be playing over and over again.



# NEVER DIE OUT

BY ADAM MATULA / PHOTOS BY ADAM GENDLER

DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK.  
MARCUS NEAL'S EXPERIENCE  
AS AN SU STUDENT HAS BEEN  
MARKED BY REDEMPTION, FAMILY,  
AND—ABOVE ALL—MUSIC.

**Marcus Neal's black snapback hat with teal trim and lettering reads "Billionaire Boys Club."** His dark skinny jeans match his Converse Chuck Taylors, and his face glows with enthusiasm and creativity. Neal sits in front of a computer monitor in the on-campus recording studio at Syracuse University's Newhouse School with his friend and fellow student Andrew Spalter. The two discuss their current views on the music industry, brainstorm, and bounce creative ideas off of each other.

"We're the people that are going to make tomorrow happen," Spalter says. "It's 10:25 p.m. on a Monday and this is what we're choosing to do," Neal says.

Marcus Neal, also known as "Indo," a 22-year-old independent hip-hop artist and senior sociology major, has performed at local Syracuse music venues and opened for respected rappers like Wiz Khalifa, Jadakiss, and most recently Big Sean in May 2013. His sixth mixtape, *Blvck Rxme* (Black Rome), releases in early August, ending a two-year drought that didn't see Indo create a single independent body of work. *Rush Hour*, a mixtape he released in May 2012, was his most recent project until he began working on *Blvck Rxme* this semester.

"I don't know if it was a conscious decision to stop rapping as much as I felt

like I was drowning inside myself," says Indo. "It was a snowball effect, one thing led to another and then another, and I was super down."

As Indo's popularity in Syracuse rose, his grades fell. The Newark, N.J., born rapper was caught up in partying and performing and lost focus on schoolwork and class.

"I would be performing at two frat houses every week, or just going hard the whole weekend meeting people and trying to get on," he says. "I wasn't building a way to get out of it; it was just getting too much."

On top of being overwhelmed by the college environment and trying to make it as an independent music artist, Indo's

grandfather, Eddie Lee Neal, passed away in July 2011 from laryngeal cancer.

"It was mad stressful and a crazy time. I was disconnected from home and hearing about this stuff and feeling down about it, but I was still trying to do shows and be poppin'," says Indo, who dedicated a song to his grandfather on *Rush Hour* called "Eddie Lee."

Soon after his grandfather passed, while working on *Rush Hour* during the fall semester of 2011, Indo was served with an academic attendance notice through an email from the university. A one-time academic meeting turned into once-a-week meetings. He was told if he didn't bring up his GPA he would be kicked out of school and was even given a warning and a final notice. "I had to devote all my energy into school, I stopped everything pretty much," Indo says.

Although he stopped releasing his own music to focus on school after *Rush Hour*, a mixtape he was already second-guessing, the passion for music still burned inside him. He continued to make beats, produce, and mix music with other Syracuse rappers and close friends, Jay Foss and IamG.

In November 2011, Indo and current business partner Foster Rubin started Tuxedo Asylum Productions, a music production company, which officially became a Limited Liability Company in November 2012. Since starting the company, Indo has refocused his energy into producing music, making beats, and writing songs for other artists, and he even works on projects from clothing designs to videos.

# I'LL NEVER DO SHOWS AND LIVE FOR MUSIC, BUT I WOULD RATHER MAKE MUSIC AND INCORPORATE IT INTO SOMETHING LARGER." DIE OUT

"I feel like music is a platform but it's not going to take me to the next level," Indo says. "People are getting music for free, and I don't want my life to depend on that. I want to be able to do shows and live for music but I would rather make music and incorporate it into something larger."

Also in November 2012, Indo met his girlfriend Shoshanah Weeks in Syracuse while she was singing at a studio session. Soon after they met, Indo produced a single for Weeks called "Touch Me," and from that point forward the two hit it off. Nearly one year later, on Nov. 6, 2013, Marcus Neal and Shoshanah Weeks became parents, and Marcus Apollo Neal was born.

"Having a kid is a blessing because it shows you what's really important," Indo says. "When I'm not with my kid, if I'm going to do something I really enjoy doing, I'd rather be working on music or bettering my education, just trying to get farther in life."

Becoming a parent made Indo realize he doesn't have time to be on the cusp in the music industry, and the limited free time he does have must be used wisely. His drive, passion, and inspiration combined with focused time management led a straight path to *Blvck Rxme*. "If something goes wrong with him or he needs something I'm going to have to be there first. Then my time to do other shit is limited. So I'm either going to do it and jump in and make *Blvck Rxme* or I'm going to sit here and think about it," Indo says. "So I finally decided that it's time."

*Blvck Rxme*, Indo's first themed mixtape, is about "being upper-echelon and not

---

being a dick about it, delivering a top-tier perspective in a more chilled-out way. It's kind of *Watch the Throne*-y, like black excellence, but from my perspective," Indo says. "This is really about me and the final version of my transformation."

Weeks says Indo is much more focused on music now than when she first met him in 2012. "Now it's about getting the music out so that he can do something that he loves and teach our son to follow his dreams," she says.

Indo is hungrier and more determined than ever to make a name for himself and Tuxedo Asylum Productions in the music world. As a college student and independent hip-hop artist, he's faced plenty of obstacles and keeps overcoming them. As Indo looks forward to graduation and the next stage of his life, music continues to ground him. "Music is a circle revolving in my life. It'll never die out, and I'll never die out." That's INDO—I'll. Never. Die. Out.







# *the* **RISE** *of an* **IDOL**

AFTER THE COMPETITION, SU IDOL WINNER  
AUSTIN HOLMES MAKES IT BIG.

BY DAQUAN THOMAS // PHOTOS BY ADAM GENDLER

**S**tanding in the very spot where breakout stars J. Cole and Joey Bada\$\$ became kings, Austin Holmes conquers the stage in the Schine Underground as he stares confidently into the howling crowd. Dressed in a simple black tee, a blue denim jacket, and a red beanie, Holmes begins to belt out a mash-up of CeeLo Green's hit "Forget You" and "Isn't She Lovely" by Stevie Wonder. Combining it with "My Girl" by The Temptations, Holmes gets the audience to its feet, singing and clapping along—mesmerized by his stage presence.



This was Holmes' first performance at Syracuse University as a contestant in the 2013 SU Idol singing competition, hosted by student a cappella group The Mandarins and the SU Traditions Commission. Although the organizers have discontinued the contest to make room for other events in 2014, SU Idol has helped propel the career of amateur artists like Austin Holmes, enabling them to make it into the music business. This spring, Holmes—who won last year's edition—will be releasing his debut EP *My Blue Coin Collection*, produced at SU Recordings. "I want this project to be an inspiration to a kid like myself who has struggles and triumphs, just so they know that anything is possible if you love music," he says. "That would make it all worthwhile."

SU Idol started in 2008 as a way to give exposure to students with singing skills who weren't part of a music group on campus. "We wanted to locate musical talents on campus that weren't in an a cappella group and give them a place to show their value," says Adriana Magarino, president of The Mandarins. Contestants were selected through auditions a week before the show. A three-person jury would then select three finalists. "It was a really intense process but lots of fun," Magarino says. Like in the television show *American Idol*, the audience had the final say. The prizes included a performance at the popular A Cappella Afterhours concert, celebrated in December at Hendricks Chapel.

A musical theater sophomore from Upper Marlboro, Md., Holmes was

one of those unknown talents SU Idol sought to unearth. His passion for singing goes back to his early childhood. When he was 3 years old, Holmes sang "Waterfalls" by TLC in class and caught the attention of his preschool teacher. "At first, I was the only one in the class who was able to remember the words, but then you could tell people started to think I was really good," he says.



As a high school student, Holmes learned to exploit his time on stage by taking on small roles in plays like *The Wizard of Oz* and *Les Misérables*. "I started out with two lines in some of the musicals but I was just in love with being on stage," he says. His love for theater led him to join SU's musical theater program in 2012, which has strengthened his performing skills. "The musical theater program has opened so many doors for me here," he says. "It's been a huge challenge sometimes, but the growth has been phenomenal."

Despite not considering participating at first, Holmes saw SU Idol as a

chance to test everything he's learned through his education. "Looking back I can definitely see how entering the competition has changed the entire dynamic of my college career," he says. "I'm glad I took that chance."

His friend and fellow musician Ahmed Saeed helped Holmes rehearse for the competition. In Saeed's room in Lawrinson Hall, they practiced for

huge song with lots of vocal range—and this song described my life perfectly at the time," he says.

At Syracuse University Records, Holmes has been working hard on *My Blue Coin Collection*, which will include covers and originals, some of which were written overnight. "Waking up at 2 a.m. and writing a song is amazing," he says. "It comes so naturally at that time—it's when I've produced some of my best work."

Dylan Rocke, one of the producers Holmes is working with, describes the singer as persistent, patient, and understanding of the dynamics of the studio. But to Rocke, what really sets Holmes apart is his knowledge of music and versatility. "He can sing music from decades ago—hip-hop, R&B—but also cover songs that just came out a few weeks ago to perfection," he says. "I can't wait to see where he will be in a few years."

Holmes sees Beyoncé as a role model he wants to follow. "Beyoncé is a singer, but she is incredibly multitalented," he says. "She acts in movies, is a businesswoman, and like a modern-day Michael Jackson uses her career to impact the lives of many—that's what I want to do." Following the path of the Texas pop star, Holmes aims to become a multifaceted artist and affect people's lives. "Beyond being the last SU Idol," he says, "I want to be known as the guy who was driven, passionate about his music career and diverse enough in his talents to inspire someone to do the same."



# BLUE ABOUT THE GREEN

BY PABLO MAYO CERQUEIRO

STRICKEN BY FUNDING  
SCARCITY, SYRACUSE MUSIC  
AND CULTURAL FESTIVALS  
STRIVE TO SURVIVE.

**Incarnated in financial adversity**, the ghost of the Great Recession is still a haunting presence for local music and cultural festivals. And a stifling one.

"Every year is a struggle and somehow you get there," says Kevin Ryan, attorney and board member of the Syracuse St. Patrick's Parade. "Festivals are experiencing rough times." The parade, which has been celebrating Irish culture and heritage in the city every March for the last three decades, is among several Syracuse-area events coping with less government money and fewer donations from supporters. The guilty parties: the feeble economy and the austerity that comes with it.

Economic hardship affects festivals in various ways.

For example, to pay for the \$35,000 it costs, the St. Patrick's Parade didn't receive any





government money this year, Ryan says. The event used to benefit from mini-grants given by Republican state Senator John DeFrancisco until his group lost control over the New York chamber in the late 2000s. For the Syracuse St. Patrick's Parade, the main cause of scarcity is the growing number of organizations requesting funds from the same sources. "Not only do you have a larger group of people chasing the same donor dollars, but there are less of those donor dollars to go around," Ryan explains. "We have to have the support of the community if this parade is going to continue to flourish."

Larry Luttinger, executive director at the Central New York Jazz Arts Foundation, agrees that government funding has languished. "We're still economically depressed in CNY, so there's no growth in public sector support," he says. "As a matter of fact, in the last five years that has shrunk." The foundation's Northeast Jazz and Wine Festival is another example of the difficulties festivals are facing, scaling down from a three-day event to a two-day attraction in 2012. The festival is still one of Syracuse ArtsWeek's largest events and has a budget of about \$75,000 for its 2014 edition, Luttinger says.

Luttinger argues that the most troubling trend for Syracuse festivals is decision-making at corporations being taken from a local to a regional level. "Many corporations that used to have control over local giving no longer have control," he says. "We're fighting negative trends both in the private sector and in the public sector."

The lack of greenbacks has even forced Syracuse music and cultural events to consider painful decisions. To save

resources, the Syracuse Juneteenth celebration, which commemorates African-American emancipation, might not take place this summer, says Kevin Henry, vice president of the festival. Its board is debating whether to cancel the event for 2014 and put up a bigger festival next year. "The idea on this is not so much that the Juneteenth festival is going away but is coming back the way it used to be in 2015," Henry says. The festival's budget has deflated in the past five years from more than \$50,000 to between \$15,000 and \$20,000, Henry says.

The Juneteenth festival grew out of the Southside neighborhood to become a citywide attraction. "It started as a small community event," Henry says. Today it takes place at Clinton Square in the downtown area.

The success of the Syracuse Juneteenth depends on the quality of its entertainment, Henry adds. Well-known headliners bring more people to the celebration, generating an incentive for businesses to pay the vending fee—last summer food vendors forked over \$400. For the last couple of years, the festival has been relying on local bands and volunteers, drawing fewer people and losing vendors.

Not everything is bad news for music and cultural festivals in the area, though.

After a one-year absence, The New York State Blues Festival is coming back this summer with a budget of \$97,500, says president and founder Jim Murphy. In 2013, the organizers canceled the festival because it had a deficit from 2012, Murphy says. The festival bears a debt now of approximately \$28,000, Murphy says. The money raised before the festival will

be used to organize the event but not to pay off its debt. "We'll raise that money through the festival and through vendors and other services that we provide over the weekend," Murphy says.

Since its birth in 1992, the NYS Blues Festival has cultivated and promoted blues music in the region, hosting headliners as big as Buddy Guy, Little Feat, Dickie Betts, and Bo Diddley. Inspired by the Chicago Blues Festival, Murphy saw a breeding ground for a blues rendezvous in the Cuse area and created the event. "At the time, Syracuse had a burgeoning blues community, and there were over 20 blues bands back in the early 90s," he says.

Festivals benefit the Syracuse community both culturally and economically, organizers say. They make Syracuse a more entertaining place to live and bring new faces to the area.

Syracuse ArtsWeek—a week-long program of festivals and community events—generated \$2.89 million in revenue last July, according to a survey report by Research and Marketing Strategies Inc., a market research and consulting firm based out of Baldwinsville. The events drew an estimated 66,604 visitors who spent on average \$92.29 on dining, vendors, lodging, parking, and artists.

"The arts are a powerful investment vehicle and also a valuable tool in creating a positive image for any city," says Larry Luttinger, the executive director at the CNY Jazz Arts Foundation. Jim Murphy, founder and head of the NYS Blues Festival, agrees that arts and cultural events help enhance the local economy. "In its own way, a little festival like the

Blues Festival is a good economic engine for the city," he says.

The Downtown Committee of Syracuse helps promote all festivals in the downtown area and organizes the AmeriCU Syracuse Arts and Crafts Festival, says Lisa Romeo, director of communications at the committee. The Arts and Crafts Festival is one of Syracuse ArtsWeek's anchor events along with the Northeast Jazz and Wine Festival. The venue drew nearly 30,000 visitors last summer, according to the marketing research report.

"Festivals are something that people really identify with our city," Romeo says. "When you have people thinking about Clinton Square, Columbus Circle, a lot of what they associate with those areas are these large festivals that bring people to downtown Syracuse and showcase what makes Syracuse and downtown really special."



*An earlier version of this story appeared on Democracywise's website at [democracywise.syr.edu](http://democracywise.syr.edu).*

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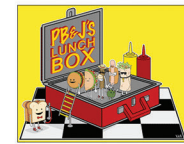
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# MUSIC IS EVERYTHING

Music is **Art**,

Music is Love,

Music is Power,

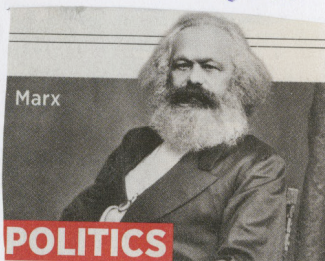
Music is misogyny.

Music is internal rhythm,  
it's the way you walk.

Music is also Drake's stupid,  
tiny, unnecessary,  
self-indulgent  
hipple. FUCK

Drake's  
hipple!

Music is Karl  
Marx's beard.



Music is an overtly-hedonistic weekend in Albany where you can't figure out if you're still tripping balls or just really dehydrated, but Gandhi's music is seriously fucking with my head right meow and that girl over there is really sexy but, unfortunately, is definitely also a succubus but you know what, fuck it, I'm gonna talk to her anyway.

(NOTE: Upon further analysis, she is most decidedly NOT a succubus. Her name is Jenny and she prefers Dog Blood over Skrillex's solo work.)

Music is **BAD SEX**; music is really, ☆☆REALLY☆☆ good sex.

Music is speech, silence, and chaos. Learn to embrace it and life will be a lot more interesting.



music...

AM I RIGHT!?!?

I'm Tom Charles, I write like a seven-year-old, and I used to be an editor for 20 Watts.



