

***DESTROYED CINEMA + MUSIC***  
***VOLUME 4***



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(in short succession)  
by JP Meldrum**

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Isolated Showers, Figrin Sam, Elan Noon, Treponeme + Pet Retina, Massiraytor, and Poors*

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I've always had a glazomaniacal streak; prior to finishing my own list - the last article in this zine - I made sure to spend much of 2025 clearing out every edition of the *Rolling Stones* 500 (703 total); a big blank spot for me is non-jazz music from before 1970, although it's hard to not have a cursory sense of what *Rolling Stone* deems classic; this magazine is largely undiluted boomer nostalgia bait, as much as their contemporary inclusions of *Blonde* and Missy Elliot cloyingly suggest otherwise. For the records' sake, I had heard roughly 225 of these albums already; many of them I love and many of them I do not. As I wrote in my "Global Summer Albums" article last issue, I have a desperate, compulsive need to 'defeat' music - in the case of *Rolling Stones*, its neigh possible - this is a tangible Western canon of Rock music, one I claimed to have defeated, and a pretty exhaustive one that can be easily found echoed by hippie-come-Reaganite uncles a touch older than my parents. The type who frequent blues bashes and beer gardens while upholding neoliberal values and complain about construction. I have mastered their culture. I can hold court at any coozie-clad campground, at any Motorcycle repair shop, any Gen Xer AO Scott type, or amongst any still-long-haired pot smokers at a WASP dinner party. I've RSVP'd already.

here are my unfiltered stream of conscious notes I wrote as I burned through hundreds of my *Rolling Stones* 500 (all editions) blindspots; roughly spanning between may - september of 2025

Chuck Berry sucks. Allman Brothers suck, though their longer, jammier songs have an addictive indica quality about them. If weed was weaker, I *would* love to puff spliffs and lose myself in their fifteen-minute southern rock wanks at a smelly amphitheatre. The Grateful Dead kinda rule, especially when they're in more avant-psychedelic territory of *Anthem of the Sun*. All these jam bands, however, pale in comparison to the relentlessly deep funk of The Meters or the James Brown records with longer tracks; although Quicksilver Messenger Service's *Happy Trail*'s inventive guitar tone and unrelenting acid-washed psychedelia hold up a lot better than their other white counterparts. *Happy Trails* is bordering on krautrock. The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* is their only great record, and probably the most influential thing against the rest of the list alongside *Sgt. Pepper's*; their surfin' stuff is fun, but their almost-*Pet Sounds* records are just that - not *Pet Sounds*. I should've listened to Dusty Springfield earlier - a great collection of great performances that I wouldn't qualify as a great record, but a stellar listen nonetheless. White rock 'n' roll genuinely ruined the blues; Robert Johnson rocks infinitely harder than Elvis. Music of the last few decades is better, more diverse, dynamic, and engaging than it's ever been. Nowhere else would I be comfortable calling Indie Rock tokenized - but a placating inclusion of *Loveless*, *In the Aeroplane over the Sea*, yet leaving Animal Collective out of it? Stick with the CCR, pal! The inclusion of the *Saturday Night Fever*

and *Ask Rufus* only beget a larger desire to hear some more disco records; there must be more than this (just type in “Hi-NRG” or “Italian Disco” into Google). Boomers only know three jazz artists; though, my list isn’t much more indicative of an extensive knowledge of the genre<sup>1</sup>. *Próxima estación... Esperanza* by Manu Chao is atrocious; the worst record I had to listen to by a large margin. A hellish ‘world fusion’ record. Cloying. Reduces any of the cultural music it incorporates to child’s toy soundboards. White guy with dreads music. *How Will the Wolf Survive?* by Los Lobos is bad. I couldn’t wait for this record to end. I recognize their importance as a ‘tex-mex’ act, but this is margarine rock ‘n’ roll. At its best, it’s a mundane Allman Brothers, and at its worse it’s like an undersung Barenaked Ladies. *Back Stabbers* by the O’Jays is the essence of Philly Soul. Emotive, lively, and packed with rich production that upend the platitudes of the Motown era preceding it. *Kick Up the Jams* by MC5. A live record that’s about as punk as it gets. Huge, loud, puts the Stooges to shame. *Odessey and Oracle* by The Zombies is a generous album filled with timeless classics and post-*Pet Sounds* maximalism that transcend simple psychedelic into something rewarding, rich, novel, and superior to other *Pet Sounds* wannabe’s on this list; namely, I’m referring to The Kinks, who are cinematic, sure, but just don’t tap into a teenaged reserve of LSD lying in my amygdala the same way The Zombies do. Outside of Ginger Baker’s Bonham-esque virtuosity on “Toad”, I much prefer *Deserali Gears* and its preeminent Queens of the Stone falsetto+fuzzy-guitar stoner pop-rock to the harmonica-sounding-guitar-bends hard rock blues of *Fresh Cream*. I always put “Tears in Heaven” in the cheap-weepee camp. I chalked Clapton up as a few hit wonders - namely “Layla” and the Cream songs in Scorsese movies - yet, maybe, he is the white blues rock’s best guitar player. It’s infectious. I can picture the live concert; losing yourself in low-test grass over his endlessly fascinating riffage. The otherwise cheap sped-up Muddy Waters/B.B. King wannabee blues of *Blues Breakers* is saved by these transcendent Clapton solos. Clapton’s Jamaican voice on “I Shot the Sheriff” is nothing short of remarkable minstrelsy; Chet Hanks and Steven Segal are shaking. Unironically, it may be superior to the Marley version, though I prefer it when he’s shredding. *Slowhand* blows, but *461 Ocean Boulevard* is stellar easy listening. I listened to five Clapton projects back-to-back while reading *Homestuck* - pausing occasionally to hear the OST. Surreal experience. I will save the rest of that for another zine. I do prefer Neil Young’s wonky amateur noise-rockish guitar work, though. Young may be one of our most stable main stays, but David Bowie is classic rock’s most consistent artist. I’m thankful for the lazy box set inclusions of Hank Williams and John Lee Hooker because I’d never earnestly listened to them before and these are collections of incredible tunes I could spin for the rest of my life. If a boomer every ever tells you “all rap sounds the same”, put a revolver in their mouth and make them listen to this entire list; the difference between Crosby, Stills, and

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<sup>1</sup> The old meme is “Mingus, Coltrane, Davis... the list goes on”. At least I got some Weather Report, and didn’t cheaply include that Getz/Gilberto record.

Nash and, say, Janis Joplin is a lot more unintelligible than the difference between Future and JID. Occasionally, I couldn't shake this conspiracy book I read called *Weird Scenes Inside the Canyon* by David McGowan - a lot of these *Rolling Stones* heroes are quite possible CIA plants meant to make the progressivism of the 60s seem disreputable<sup>2</sup>, and more so some of these guys are for sure pedophiles, murders, and, possibly, literal demons - additionally, most of them are like one percent of the artist of Phil Elverum. If I am to continue championing domestic beer, as my brother and I did in the third volume of this magazine, then a deep dive into ZZ Top is in order - *Eliminator* is electric and, while *Tres Hombres* is a touch less heavy, it's still got some killer southern "Beer Drinkers & Hell Raisers" mojo. I need to have a meaningful blues phase; I've only ever really been enamoured with Robert Johnson's *King of the Delta Blues Singers* (which is included), but rushing through some of these Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters releases really didn't do em' justice. I will return - not to be confused with blues rock, white blues, and that shit - I'm talking delta, Chicago, pre-1960s shit. Not BB King either, frankly, that *Live at the Regal* record bored me; felt like a guy had translated the rhetoric of the past for the masses, and had no semblance of this deep, spiritual, raw, historical thing. Even his *Live at County Jail* is paint-by-numbers, though there's a lot more emotion lying in his guitar work here. As the myriad guitar solos blur together across this ridiculous 480 hours of music, Chappelle's *Show* skit "What Makes White People Dance" has never been more prescient. Turns out, AC/DC is a pretty good album band, not just a selection of kid-friendly hard rock singles; like ZZ Top, I just want to crush beers and not-shave to it. Even moreso, fucking Def Leppard, man. Jesus. The same way indie rock amateurs pine to emulate the shiny production of Robin Guthrie, or, even, the reel-to-reel nostalgia of my pal David Perry of Loving fame; they should be pining to get this jam-packed Mutt Lange sound. The *most* arena music ever. Insane that Def Leppard is relegated to "Pour Some Sugar on Me" fame nowadays. Ian Cohen's recent Sunday *Pitchfork* review of *Hysteria* is why I still read *Pitchfork*; its filled with over-educated snark while indignantly defending a band maligned by Hair Metal revisionism. Another one-song-remembered act is Dire Straits - at least, for myself and my ilk. *Brothers in Arms* is a masterpiece I can't comfortably add to my own top 100 without spending more time with it, but there's a knowing genre-defiance that reminds of a dry-witted Ween; bordering on satire while remaining seriously excellent pop music. Roxy Music is some of the bravest music on here; it's tinged with the avant-garde and orchestrated beyond the typical four-piece rock band. Art school talking heads that exchanged Afrobeat preoccupations with enchanting Frippian guitar solos. Kill me, but all I hear is Ye beats when I listen to Otis Redding; Parliament, on the other hand, has aged much better than

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<sup>2</sup> Specifically, Jim Morrison, who pretended his parents died, while his dad was an actual military intelligentsia; this is even dramatized in Oliver Stones' *The Doors* movie. I read this book in like two sittings, and didn't take it too seriously - but a lot of young women went missing; many of whom were last seen partying David Crosby and Mick Jagger in the Canyon. David MacGowan died quite unexpectedly, suspiciously even, and doesn't quite deserve an Alex Jonesian reputation for conspiratorial thought - he was not an ideologue, just a guy making connections.

its later sampling on *The Chronic*. Chris Cornell's Seattle slur sure makes sounds like "shit on my chest" on "Fell on Black Days". *Superunknown* is way heavier than I thought it would be - I have a cursory *like* of Audioslave and know "Blackhole Sun" from *Guitar Hero*; great band, but no Alice in Chains. Read a couple volumes of *Berserk* to it; pretty fitting. Bo Diddley is much more energetic OG rock 'n' roll than Elvis, Chuck Berry, and Little Richard, though it has this certain Raffi-like kid friendly quality that, at least, the hip-shaking Elvis lacked, plus the guitar work is far more creative than the over-rehearsed session musicians on those other records. Billy Joel rules, especially if you look at him as America's king of City Pop although his ornamental prog-rock tendencies undermine his potent platitude balladry. The Dylan albums I hadn't heard before were not done justice - he's lyrical at his best and undersung musically once the 90s rolled around. In fact, Dylan's white blues, particularly on the 16 minute "Highlands" closer to *Out of Mind*, is one of the most profound, idiosyncratic, and hilarious appropriations of the twelve bar blues I've ever heard. I'm a life-long Dylan fan - I've got a cool dad - but that Timmy Chalamet biopic really activated a Dylanology in me that brought a profound desire to wrap my head around this man's oeuvre better than hack-supreme James Mangold ever could; admittedly, he made a great biopic entirely composed of pieces of trivia various dads have regaled to me my entire life... its so fucking stupid that the Johnny Cash stuff in this flick aren't ture. Prior to the release of *How Does It Feel?* (otherwise known as *A Complete Unknown*), however, I was enraptured by Dylan's twenty-plus-minute "A Murder Most Foul", which dropped without warning on YouTube during the pandemic, and acts as something of a *Finnegan's Wake* to "Highlands" *Ulysses*. I'd rather write about Dylan than Eric Clapton any day. I wasn't crazy about *John Wesley Harding*, though it's in the tradition of the perfect *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, which required me almost twenty years of music listening to hold up as a masterpiece - whereas *Highway 61*, *Blonde on Blonde*, and *Bringin' it All Back Home* have a sense of musical immediacy, and *Blood on the Tracks* has a disarming intimacy that I had had fetishized by Jimmy LaFave covers - who's *Blue Nightfall* could reach my top hundred records with better consideration - from naissance. In fact, how many Dylan records do I have in my top hundred as I'm writing this (August 20th 2025)? I have zero Dylan on my list. That's a pick me choice - I don't want to be one of those mysterious-for-mysterious sake "heyyyyy, man..." still-hand rolling-cigs poetry open mic acoustic guitar guys; but *Highway 61* is a perfect record from any angle, *Blood on the Tracks*' lyrics continues to haunt me, and I smoked pot to "Rainy Day Women Nos. 12 & 35" many times in my teens. I'll make another list sometime. *Basement Tapes* is a good The Band album, and not really a Dylan record in my earnest opinion, though the return of the iconic *Highway 61* organ sound is a welcome readdition. Ian Dury, some pub rock guy I've never heard of, put together a really fun record with *New Boots and Panties!!* that puts into question why Mike Skinner is totally absent from this list - drunk British wisdom is a real thing, and the Streets do it just a touch better than Dury. Maybe it's just



those infectious garage drums. I am sick of crushing this list when I know there is nothing like nor no Pinegrove on it. Gram Parsons *Grievous Angel* set the stage for what the 90s were going to do to folk-tinged country (Uncle Tupelo ecteria), while retaining the lush acid microdose of The Byrds; which really don't do it for me beyond their spirited rendition of "Mr. Tambourine Man" and some of the Dudley Moore-ish jazz-orchestra arrangements and 'studio as an instrument' production on *The Notorious Byrd Brothers* though those records pre-date the addition of Parsons. Big Brother & The Holding Company record *Cheap Thrills* stands far above the incredibly milquetoast *Pearl* by Janis Joplin because this brand of white soul is far heavier, more drugged out, and scrappy-virtuosic in a live context. The Eurythmics are this delicious stew of Kraftwerk, Grace Jones, the Talking Heads that somehow informed Crystal Castles more than LCD Soundsystem. Its hard to believe *Touch* is fully formed, quirky, idiosyncratic, and long-form. Are the Eurythmics uncool now? Seems pretty cool to me - cooler than *Trans Europa Express* or The Human League. Tom Petty's entire oeuvre just sounds like "Jessie's Girl" by Rick Springfield, though he shakes the pop-rock Dylan pastiche of *Damn the Torpedoes* for straight-ahead road-trip FM radio jams on *Full Moon Fever*. The Clash's *Sandinista!* is a generous, ambitious record that's sort of better than their self-titled and *London Calling* because of how much genre territory it covers; ragtime, dub, disco, and punk all rub shoulders in this giant, epic, song-forward opus; however, a 2.5 hour album is not what a guy crushing 5-12 records a day is trying to hear. In fact, this might be the most opulent records ever made, in terms of songs, ideas, and production, and might be endlessly listenable in support of there the Clash's thesis that they wanted something that guys on oil rigs far away from record stores could dig into without having to make a trek to some far away record store could enjoy for a while. *Sadinsta!* is, maybe, the easiest five-star record I've first-time listened to thus far, in close contention with *Happy Trails*, the first volume of *The Best of the Girl Groups*, *Time out Of my Mind*, and the unmentioned *Metal Box* by Public Image LTD {at this point in the diatribe I'm exactly five hundred records, and over two hundred records in recent listening in thus spiritually through a '500 list' but not the whole or any whole '500 list'}. The Who records I'd never heard (*The Who Sell Out*, ...) hit about as hard as a sober The Zombies compared to *Quadraphenia* which I have smoked roughly two 120 lb peoples worth of weed to before; stupid it's not my list, though really *Quadraphenia* is literally an okay movie all building to the euphoria inducing climax of "Love Reign O'er Me". I've always loved Bruce Springsteen's Jersey outcast ruffian troubadour swag, but by the time *Tunnel of Love* rolled around, I'm not convinced he had much else left to offer; at least musically. 2002's post-9/11 hokey kumbaya call for peace *The Rising* is almost Springsteen's Americana answer to Nick Cave's cryptic, gothic optimism on *The Boatman's Call*, but his saccharine pop-country production choices and folksy lets-just-hold-hands liberalism undermine whatever renewed creative spirit this record is meant to reflect. It's an embarrassment this first Billie Ellish record was included - who

are they trying to placate? The wannabe Yeezus industrialism is faux edgy and her whisper-vocal fry just does not cut it in such a competitive indie-pop sphere - her sophomore album, *Happier Than Ever*, on the other hand, is this great Mitski pastiche that I cosign outright (not included on the list), and *Hit Me Hard and Soft* is largely a safe Tik-Tokable bedroom record that could harmlessly play at low-volume at the world's most boring third wave coffee shop. This record gave me anxious butterflies because I know about nine girls who sing in this exact cadence, and could easily produce something superior to this dogshit white Yeezus trash production Finneas has put together, but see this record as a north star for what to do with their Elishian timbre. Cheap minor key isms, annoying harmony engine created vocal layers, and a youthful affected vocal fry that, admittedly, is precinct of the most lazy tik tok ready 'indie pop' ready singer-songwriter singers. Maybe Lorde was the OG; *Melodrama* is a very great record, though, and *Pure Heroine* was novel and had a genuine homemade affect, whereas Finneas's production reeks of overschooling and first-time-ever-smoking-pot guy calling something "hard". Other than the beautiful-albeit-platitudinous "listen before i go", this has been the most miserable listening experience thus far. I'd be infinitely less offended by the inclusion of the aforementioned Mitski, Olivia Rodrigo, Gracie Abrams, another Lorde record, or Big Thief (not the same, but the same audience appeasement). I'd never really listened to Run-DMC, and these records had some primitive novelty to them, though Eazy-E's solo stuff and Whodini are so much more involved, in terms of MC prowess and production, than anything these progenitors had to offer. Rage Against the Machine are the *only* rap-rock group of note. Having to listen to De La Rocha's melodramatic delivery for an entire record - more effective in the occasional track - is a slog, while it's fun to revel in Tom Morello's super-90s The Edge on crack guitar fuckery. Willie Nelson, someone I've enjoyed best in the context of The Highwaymen, is the Aretha Franklin of country music. His performances, namely those American pop standards on *Stardust*, are undeniably made his own by the powerful humanity of his vocals; while Aretha is pining and confrontational, Nelson is world-weary and cordial. Oasis are Mancunian shoegaze. Pulp are incel britpop Scott 1-3; wish I listened to them in my teens. Echo & The Bunnyman are the Shadow to the Talking Heads' Sonic, or the Silver to Joy Division's Shadow, or the Metal Sonic to David Bowie's Classic Sonic. Dr. John sings like Van Morrison in *The Sims*. The Sun Record anthology is filled with song I've already heard before, but nonetheless an impressive catalogue of iconic early rock n roll. Jerry Lee Lewis kinda pales compared to the aforementioned Bo Diddley if we're talking early rock. I still contend that whites just fucked up the blues through pop structure, personality free songwriting, and proliferation; that's not to say some of these tracks bang, though it seems I prefer Lewis's move towards country, like "All Night Long", than his bluesy rock naissance period. The inclusion of multiple Harry Styles albums kinda irks me, but, in good faith, I conceded that I'd never given the guy a non-diagetic listen before - immediately, on the Grammy Album of the Year, I'm irked.



"Music for a Sushi Restaurant" is schlocky Prince-slotation, though cited by Harry as City-Pop inspired. *Harry's House* is a lazy vie for piece of the Black music pie while taking respite in a thrift store; trying on some alternative swag on your daddy's credit card. If you're in Harry's position - where you're allegedly making a City Pop record that sounds absolutely nothing like Takako Mamiya, then why wouldn't you collaborate with, same, Harumi Hasono? You have a blank check; work with someone cool, pay em' well, and shock the world. "Cinema" is a great song though; has that Blood Orange level of cool, and captures the easy-listening backbeat of City-Pop with a studied grace, although its lazy sing-a-long Daft Punk vocoder climax brings an otherwise great track down a peg. I vehemently dislike this record as a whole; its horn section sounds like a Target commercial; its production is high-fluoride Tame Impala - *Currents* is allegedly the 382nd best album of all time; ugh, the wannabe disco jams make me want to shoot myself in the calf. Kevin Parker is a talented guy, but he uses this saccharine nostalgic high-CBD psychedelic palette that is just too nostalgic and too clinical to meaningfully feel 'trippy' to someone who's listened to even a single note of, say, Quicksilver Messenger Service. Pop conventions undermine hallucinatory aesthetics. I'm not comfortable enough dancing to understand Bad Bunny; maybe one day. James Brown live, as any muscophile knows, is only way to here him, and this performance on "Bewildered" from the *Sex Machine* performance is eponymously bewildering. He hits these majestic falsettos that fight with Otis Redding and Thom Yorke in the same phrase. Man. The Slits are good, but they're no the Raincoats, who are deceptively Avant-garde, and sits well next to the only other avant record on here (Captain Beefheart's inimitable *Trout Mask*; though not that inimitable since it all sounds like a datura version of "Wang Dang Doodle" by Howlin Wolf). X autoplaid after The Slits, and it hit like never before; I watched *Decline of Western Civilization* not long ago, and it made me appreciate how fucking poppy X's track were while still being a straight-up evil misanthropic punk band on the stage. "The World's a Mess; It's in My Kiss" is an unbelievable tune; I can't believe its lyrics haven't been appropriated by a popular track yet. I didn't write about The Drifters compilation on here, but that feels like a gateway into a deeper layer into the oceanic depths of Motown - a stellar record that sounds like a really well supervise soundtrack to a Sopranos wannabe. *The Black Album* should not be on this list, if *Rolling Stones* understood the fucking platitude Metallica has amongst metalheads (*Justice for All...* is kinda it, though I've never truly agreed; *Lulu* is a masterpiece). Hearing it in full for the first time, I'd say it's largely a matter of tempo as to why Metallica's later oeuvre is treated with disdain - they're still 'metal' but they're no longer thrash; but it's certainly still fucking Metallica. Megadeath is far more consistent, but has never reached a *Master of Puppets* high (not on this list!). Sam Cooke's *Live at the Harlem Square Club, 1963* is the definition of locked in; I'd never been too taken by his recorded material, but the sheer energy involved in this performance is awestraking; his career spanning compilation *Portrait of a Legend* is nothing to scoff at either if not too-damn-exhaustive. A

through-thread is sewn to hip-hop here, at least in his more intense vocal moments and sense of spontaneity. Graham Parker is pretty uninspired, though his Elvis Costello pastiche on "Don't Get Excited" is quite impressive; although when the album looped over "Discovering Japan" sounded amazing. Maybe, just maybe, I'm a little burned out on classic rock. *Sleepless* by Peter Wolf is just this little tour of classic rock -isms. He does a Bono impersonation, a Stones tune (with Jagger and Richard featuring), a little Tom Waits via Howlin' Wolf type jam, he does Sting, Muddy Water, and maybe a little Neil Young. None of it feels original. Just pure tribute; not even hautological in an Ariel Pinkian way; impression - the sincerest form of flattery. *Sleepless* should be called *Sleepy*. U2, whom I always viewed as a bits-and-bites poppurri of MBV, The Police, and, preeminently, Coldplay, are pretty spectacular, but hard to separate from their cultural dominance. These are album albums, though. *Boy* sounds a lot like its contemporaries, with its New Wave affect and reggae tinged bass lines, but *Achtung Baby* is a hyper-modern record relative to the first era of their oeuvre. Bono's earnest call-to-action vocals get a bit redundant after a while, though. No Doubt are Ska-infused Weezer. Moby Grape does not belong on this list; they have enough examples of glassy psychedelic rock, and their self-titled is unexceptional. Richard and Linda Thompson's *I Want to See the Bright Lights Tonight* is basically a really stellar Neil Young record with a very discreet touch of global music. Tasteful, lovely folk record, and their final duo record *Shoot Out The Lights* tastefully amps up the blues rock while retaining the fine-drawn romanticism without veering into beer jingle territory. Mary J. Blige has hits, but *What's the 411?* is great a progenitor for contemporary RnB, but doesn't hold up well against the more involved Hip-Hop-tinged-RnB productions later in the 90s (Aaliyah, TLC, Brandy, and Mariah Carey). Too much Elvis on this list - many of which are compilations featuring the same songs as another inclusion. Silly! The Dixie Chick's *Fly* is a masterpiece - the ultimate adult contemporary fiddle record that make me long for the interior of BC, a coozie, and some fun drunk moms kickin' around. Every song belongs in a movie, on a mixtape, or at a graduation. Excellent stuff from The Chicks; *Fly* is a forever record. The Police's *Ghost in the Machine* is like Genesis meets Tangerine Dream. Pretty sweet record. Linda Ronstedt's *Heart like a Wheel* sounds like Carly Simon by way of the Eagles; easy listening. The Paul Butterfield Blues Band is almost the perfect gateway record to Chicago Blues / Electric Blues; though, I'm a neophyte Blues listener, but I got to Muddy Waters before this, and I find Butterfield more accessible yet lacking some of the grit, iron, and soul of its progenitors; still, not the most egregious white soul in the 'canon'. Professor Longhair feels like the oldest music on this list; that New Orleans touch of ragtime. The eccentricity of his vocals and lyrics just feel fun, kitsch, almost Nickelodeon though not as extreme as Howlin Wolf. *Santana's* inclusion just made long for more jazz fusion - maybe some Chick Corea would've been nice on here. Actually, in retrospect, *Santana's* first self-titled album is a 10/10. The grooves really lock in halfway through and transcend the psychedelic rock of its

counterparts by leaning into Latin roots in the auxiliary percussion; there's a crunch, but expansiveness to the production while still sounding a little bit like Cream. This is a special, unique mélange of influences that has aged like fine blue cheese. I recommend specifically the one-two punch in the middle of the record: "Savor" and "Jingo". Chico Hamilton is not on this list; I love him, and thought it was pretty cool that he had a prominent role in the excellent noir joint *Sweet Smell of Success*. Some of the more generic moments on *Santana* - always underscored by specifically Latin virtuosity - remind me of the Doors, whose frontmen's unhinged performances attracted me far more than the music itself. I had to listen to a couple of records by them - I think I've only ever greatest hits<sup>3</sup>The Doors. Really, look up the *Kids in the Hall* sketch about the Doors. That's where I'm at with them; I like the movie a bit, though, mostly because it's got Oliver Stone's politically chaotic mix of nostalgia and disdain for the 60s (note to self, before your forget, deeper dives post-list completion on artists listed in this footnote is a must<sup>3</sup>). Laura Nyro - ahead of her time with the 70s tinged RnB. Whatever I said about U2 before I take back; listening to Bono for an hour plus significantly increases the chances of developing talking to an Amnesty International person for an hour without donating. Rod Stewart's album is a one-song wonder; Maggie May is undeniable, but that Amazing Grace cover is a national shame.

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I spoke with my friend Brian Stubbs about the Rolling *Stones*. Brian is nothing short of a local legend and the reason I revel in the DIY - let me take this little aside...

Some friends of mine from high school; Justus, the late Jared, and some others had a band called ION; largely it was Slayer worship with a touch of The Sword. They played a show at a grimy little house that's changed nomenclature over the years. That was Brian's house; he still lives there now. I enjoyed ION's set fine, and got drunk as a skunk, but afterwards I saw a band called EARS - the 'house' band. For some reason, there is a new, different, band called EARS playing around town again now; they're pretty good too. Noise Pop. Anyway, as they droned on in feedbacked high frequencies and punishing low ends without a beat, Johnny, closer friends to ION than I, turned to me and asked "have they started yet?" I understood that that was the point; I liked Merzbow well enough; and Johnny was simply waiting for the music that never came. I loved this reaction. This 'normie leveling', for lack of a better term. Ever since then, that's all I ever desired to do; to support; to see live. I was not exposed to any punk house show shit before then, and I got the most esoteric thing possible first. It's a high I've been chasing ever since; so, forever, thank you, Brian!

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<sup>3</sup> Def Leppard, ZZ Top, Santana, Dire Straits (their solo stuff too), Public Image Ltd, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Grateful Dead, Girl Groups (general), James Brown (its pretty deep, but it go deeper), Muddy Waters, Sun Records, Echo and The Bunnymen, The Clash, Roxy Music.

Brian, who's about fifteen years my senior, told me he had some book from the late 70s published by the *Rolling Stones* called *The Rolling Stones Guide to Modern Music*, or something to that effect. He hated it, because it disparaged George Clinton and funk music en masse - one look at any edition of the 500 lists would suggest otherwise - and he knew this, too, but argued this genre-diverse pivot was apostasy. You went to *Rolling Stones* for rockism. For that pure Zeppelin worship, white blues, eponymous Rolling Stones (the band) fodder. And that's what I sought out; their newer inclusion - the DEI of it all - are better curated manifold elsewhere. As a 29-year-old hipster, I'd heard nearly all their newly minted 'greatest' records through cultural osmosis - it's not helping anyone! If we're to revolutionize and globalize this list, then where's Elizabeth Cotton? Taeko Onuki? Sister Rosetta Tharpe? Sakamoto? Sophie? Frankly, *Rolling Stone* is better off upholding a slightly updated mid-century rockist canon than slapdashedly throwing D'Angelo's *Voodoo* in the top twenty amongst a sea of Springsteen's. I'd never *actually* listened to Janis Joplin, for example, but I've certainly listened to Beyonce's self-titled. He suggested I dig up some old copies of *Creem* magazine, and see what they have to offer as a counterpoint to *Rolling Stones* apostasy. I'm on it, man!

I talked to other people about this endeavour - my dad, CFUV station manager Rowan Grice and music director Troy Lemberg, my coworkers, and my bandmates - and the common question is "are you doing it in order?". Doing this kind of completionist task is already symptomatic of OCD and ADHD hyper-fixation; so doing it in order isn't necessarily conducive to successful completion (nor do I think main-lining four-hundred classic albums is all that fair 'a way to listen to 'em regardless of order'); but my methodology was nonetheless such: listen to a bunch of records that *seem* to fit in the same category. Like, listen to all the 'jam bands', all the Bowie you've not heard, hair metal & hard rock, psych records with hand-painted covers, Clapton, reggae, and so-on. Close out categories as best you can. To me, this taught me what *Rolling Stones* sees as essential within a specific genre - funk is reduced to James Brown, The Meters, and a couple Parliament records; jazz is just Davis, Coltrane, and Getz. Additionally, I didn't rely on my [Last.Fm](#) log to decide what I had heard before - I've tracked everything I've listened to since 2008 - but instead went off memory. Some of these records I've allegedly heard before, but fuck if I remember (namely, deep-cut Rolling Stones and Blondie, otherwise it was pretty much accurate recollection).

Defeating every edition of the *Rolling Stones* 500 has fortified my own taste; I'm not a classic rock guy, in fact, I'd argue the majority of these 'classic' records are better as disparate single placed into beer-drinking playlist for mixed company, or passively queued up by disaffected FM radio jockeys then played at a hushed volume as one channels there internalized racism towards traffic and bike lanes. It's stupid how hooked on the blues white rock was. Many of these bands are franchises; lifestyles; whole histories one can sink their teeth into as if a subculture unto itself; beyond cult following, but an industry unto itself. There was a lot more money to be made in the KISS days. The best franchises are the most inoffensive, and the most rabid are the most

tenuous. I think I'd like to be a Def Leppard guy now; maybe an AC/DC and ZZ Top one too. Also, The Clash. By god, The Clash is *actually* cool. Those subcultures I support full-mast. However, the *Rolling Stones* 500 is overachingly a canon of the inoffensive: so afraid of the avant-garde, and lacking in anything earnestly subcultural or esoteric. The weirdest record on here is *Trout Mask Replica*, and while that too ranks amongst my favourites of all-time too, Beefheart should be championed as a gateway and not a stop-gap. Many of the "hard rock" and "punk" records on here only made my appreciation, and desire, for tougher metal and more extreme music increase - I want to *actually* fucking rock my face off. *Metal-Archives*'s all-time Death Metal list... watch out. *Rolling Stones* is the picturesque, refined, clinical canon of rock music; if you want something raw and unfiltered, for the love of god, look elsewhere.

I've been told this whole endeavour is a very 'masculine' thing to do, albeit I was told this by man.

# MOONSHAKE

@moonshakemag - moonshakemagazine.substack.com

## INDEBTED; A Debt To the Old Town Circus by Elijah Kant



There is an ease to which A Debt To the Old Town Circus traverses the range of genres that colour its 27-minute runtime. The album retains a sense of air and space across its many textural changes, a quality mainly in part to the incredibly clean production style used by Elijah Kant for its mix. It flows without resistance through moments of ambience, haze, jazz, and post punk without feeling conflicted or sprawling. Rather, its 8 track run feels like a natural progression through its spoken word and swells of noise.

A Debt To the Old Town Circus feels to have shed a level of darkness and tension present on the 2024 release of Greens Beat. From the album's opening transitions, there is a lightness to it not fully explored on Kant's previous release. This simplicity allows the technical aspects of LPs lyricism and arrangement be brought into focus, showing great artistic maturity in the short window between each project.

***"The words flow through him by way of a 3rd hand..."***

The intensity of the brass-driven wave closing out Passing By/Panic immediately breaks into the lightness of Open. Easily an album highlight, Open features guest vocals by Sora Rosenberg that give the track a bright quality complimented by crisp SG guitar chords and drumming by Ephraim Boyarin. The track sets the tone for a sense of airiness that covers the first half of the album. So, Thing (Deep and Hidden) is a high point of the storytelling used in the projects spoken word lyrical styling. Feeling both conceptual and autobiographical, the songwriting across the album remains engaging across its tonal shifts. Another guest track, Jumping follows its opening repeated mantra by Fynn Langvand into some of the album's strongest guitar work with its guest solo by Luke Phalen (also providing the song's drums).





# MOONSHAKE

@moonshakemag - moonshakemagazine.substack.com



The bright and ambient vocal stylings of Kant and Melody Lunareyses echo those of Open, giving the mix a hazy quality that lets the guitar portions stand out. The layered quality of Jumping captures a spring-like warmth and emotional complexity that make it another standout of the LP's run.

***"Haven't you heard? Can't you hear it?"***

**Photo: @photoraprose - Sora Rosenberg**

Project 88 provides an instrumental interlude between the open movement of the first half of the album into a more complex and darker tone that shadows the second. The field recording opening of Hearing Things transitions into an industrial-influenced use of modular synthesizers and vocal stylings reminiscent of early releases by Throbbing Gristle. Despite being somewhat of a sonic pivot, the transition doesn't feel abrupt. It weaves in threads of noise interspersed across previous tracks into a tonal shift that gives the album greater nuance without feeling disjointed. Kant's bass playing remains a grounding force in the grooves that build the album's rhythm sections. It shines especially on Burd Mans Theme, a track that feels like a perfect sampling of Kant's current sound. The slowly climbing tempo meets a rush of overdriven guitar and vocals that make one of my favourite moments of the whole project. A Debt To the Old Town Circus takes its broad spectrum of influences and cultivates its own distinctive space and sound. It waltzes through a spectrum of textures and moods with a lightness and unchallenged quality that's becoming a hallmark of Kant's stylings as a musician and producer.

**- Rowen M. Brown**

**If you like these, you'll like this. If you like this, you'll like these;**

- *Through Donkey Jaw*; Amen Dunes
- *Self-Titled*; Suicide
- *The Name of This Band Is Talking Heads*; Talking Heads



## **An Interview with Braden Sitter Sr., director of Pee Pee Poo Poo Man**

by Nick Workman

*1) Who are you, where are you from, and how did you get involved in film making?*

I was born in Barrie and grew up in North Bay. I got into movies the regular way. I made a lot of movies in highschool and after highschool I lived in Ottawa for 3 years and made a lot of movies there. I never put much effort in getting them seen. I came to Toronto in 2015. I did not pursue my art aggressively. I would say I pursued it leisurely. I spent a lot of time hanging out. The last 5 years I have been taking it a bit more seriously in terms of trying to figure out how to make a living at it.

*2) How did you come up with The Pee Pee Poo Poo Man film?*

I was looking to make something fun and not spend a lot of time trying to make everything technically perfect. I didn't want to work from a script either. I had spent the two previous years shooting and editing a feature that I didn't like and have no plans on releasing. I was pushing back against the uptightness of that project. My first thought was to do something riffing off the framework of Alan Clarke's Elephant where it's the same action repeated a lot of different ways but I didn't know what it would be about. I wanted to make something really stupid and fun. Then I remembered the 2019 news story about the pee pee poo poo man which had this repetitive element I was looking for. It kind of spiralled from there. I also had the first 12 minutes of a spy movie I shot in 2021 that I liked but never knew what to do with. That story was supposed to be about a schizophrenic guy who thinks he's working for the CIA. So the movie kind of just grew as I went along with it. There was a basic structure early on. The first half was going to be about Miguel and the second half would be about his victims. The rest of it was just details to figure out as I went.

*3) The film has a DIY aesthetic to it - was this always the intent or was it due to necessity?*

It was a necessity. I wanted a story I could fool around with and not need to have entirely figured out from the get-go. That's kind of a tough sell for investors. I also didn't want to have to try and convince anyone to give me any money to make a movie. I don't know how to do that. And really how much money do you think you can get that would make it worth the trouble? For

something scripted and better defined from the start that would make more sense but I didn't want to make that kind of movie. The other thing is, if you take money from someone and the movie sucks you still have to put the movie out to try and make back the money which would be a horrible feeling. Making the movie for no money meant that if I wasn't happy with it I could just not put it out. This was important because I considered the previous film a failure and I needed a safe environment to get my mojo back. The movie I made previously that I didn't like probably cost only a little bit more than TTPPPM but because I was trying to make it look like it cost a lot more, shooting everything was a lot slower in a bad way. It took too much time to make everything look good and it killed the energy on set. It made the whole thing kind of stressful and boring. I was being precious about things that should have been lower priority and I didn't prioritize the things that should have been higher priority. So on this one I didn't want to put a ton of effort into hiding the budget. I just wanted to go go go.

The first half of the movie is all shot on Canon Vixia camcorders. These cameras record to SD cards but they look pretty much the same as the Canon HV30 I had in highschool, just without the annoyance of dealing with DV tapes. I guess that was part of my mentality too, trying to reconnect to the fun of making movies the way I was when I was younger. You can get these cameras for 100 bucks used and I usually had two of them going at once to get everything done faster. When I started to film more people getting dumped on I decided I wanted to have as many cameras as possible shooting it since it's one of those things you only get one take at so I started filming them with my Sony that looks a bit better and my friend Eli Speigel would bring his camera which is really good and next thing you know we have a bunch of slow motion dumps that look way clearer than the rest of the movie. The footage doesn't match. So kill me.

One thing I would have done differently is getting a boom mic going. I had a couple lavs but no boom and it was lazy of me not to and that came back to bite me in the ass when it was time to do the sound mix. My buddy Rob Coxford was able to use the on-board camera mic to rescue a lot of scenes that had horrible audio but it was stressful and there's a couple scenes that are kind of iffy. He did a great job with it and saved the movie from sounding like total dog shit. He did the sound mix in one week by the way. It was finished the day before the premiere and it was the most stressful week of the movie. I would not recommend doing that.

Anyways all this to say that the lo-fi thing was necessary because I needed to be able to focus on what I cared about if I was going to be able to keep the momentum going to get this thing

done. I just can't muster up enough excitement about those technical details when there's an endless list of other stuff I also have to do. I could have hypothetically taken a lot of time to make it look and sound a bit nicer but why? What's the point? And what are the trade offs? One of the cool things about doing it the way we did it is all the stuff we caught by being able to move fast. Money buys you more control, time can also do this, but I tried the control thing and it didn't work out very well so this one was all about chaos and speed.

*4) DIY films are very inspiring because it shows the medium does not have to be contained to what Hollywood serves us. What advice would you offer to anyone thinking of entering the DIY filmmaking space?*

There's not much advice I can give in a general sense that would be very useful. What works for me isn't going to work for everyone. If you're just starting out and asking for advice I would say it's probably better to just start making stuff and not spend too much time looking for good advice. Once you start making something you'll run into specific problems and then you can ask for advice about those when you have a meaningful context for it. The important thing if you really want to do it is to make stuff and stop not making stuff. A baby doesn't learn how to talk by asking for advice. Just try a lot. Invest a lot of time but don't invest a lot of money. Make a lot of mistakes as cheaply as possible. If you spend a little money you're going to make the same mistakes and learn most of the same lessons as if you spent a lot of money. Just get the cheap basic mistakes/lessons out of the way first. Watch other no-budget films. Help out on other film sets. Show your work to people you respect and tell them explicitly that you want their most brutal feedback. I'm available for consulting calls for 100\$ an hour. First half hour is free. Gimme a shout.

*5) No Canadian film, no matter how big or small, is complete without a familiar Canadian face. How did you get Spencer Rice (of Kenny vs. Spenny fame) to appear in the film?*

Spenny was a late addition to the movie. I found his email and talked to his agent and we worked out an arrangement. We got his stuff done in 5 hours. We had to drive to Kingston because that's where he lives. I wanted to get the most out of it so those scenes are the only scenes that were ever fully scripted. With all the other scenes I would pretty much just have a couple ideas and use those as a starting point to play around with.

6) *Toronto is seeing buzz in the DIY filmmaking space - what makes this city unique for DIY filmmaking, and who else should we be aware of coming out of Toronto?*

I've been really lucky in Toronto the past few years to find a group of friends and filmmakers with similar goals who are eager to help each other. There are more filmmakers in TPPPPM than there are actors. I am extremely grateful to be a part of a community like this. Everyone is constantly making things. Ethan Vestby and Alan Jones have done everyone a huge solid with their work on *Bleeding Edge*. They play movies all the time and it's a good ongoing thing you can check out if you're in Toronto and you want to be getting involved in this sort of thing. I don't wanna type out a giant list of names so I will keep it short and say that if you liked *The Pee Pee Poo Poo Man* maybe you should check out Zachary George (@teddybearadventureclub on IG) and his short films *Object Permanence* and *I TOOK ACID BEFORE GOING TO THE DENTIST AND EVERY CAVITY WAS A GOD SHAPED HOLE*. He has a new movie he is working on that I'm very excited about. I also want to give a shout-out to a movie I helped out on last summer called *Toronto Apartment* by Tristan Wheeler that I believe will be coming out sometime next year.

7) *For those who miss the Victoria screening, where can they see The Pee Pee Poo Poo Man?*

Anyone missing the movie in Victoria can check it out online on November 7th which is when I'll start renting it on my website at [www.peepeepoopooman.com](http://www.peepeepoopooman.com). You can also see other screening dates there in whatever city is playing it.

8) *What's next on the docket for you - films, productions, art?*

Once I release the movie online in November I plan to take a couple months off to settle down and get properly bored. I don't feel like rushing into anything. I have a few movies that have been filmed already that need to be edited and there are some buddies writing scripts that I would like to direct or produce. My god-daughter says she is writing a horror film that sounds pretty cool. I'd like to make more movies. I learned a lot doing this one and I look forward to trying something new.

## **A REPORT FROM THE SAUNA GOER**

### **ON 5 PUBLIC VICTORIA SAUNAS, A DISCUSSION OF SAUNA CULTURE, AND AN INTERVIEW ON HOME SAUNA CONSTRUCTION**

#### **A COUPLE WORDS...**

There's nothing like a good sauna. Nothing like getting a good sweat on. Dry heat, and the smell of hot clean cedar. Feeling your body relax, heat cooking the thoughts right out of you. Feeling the sweat run down your forehead, watching it roll down your chest and arms and legs, detoxing all your processed foods, and drugs, and booze, and chugging down litres of cool clean water to replenish it, and get your pee nice and crystal clear for a quick piss after.

*Nothing like the sauna*— a place to unwind, to stretch and rehab injuries, to get all those good anti-inflammatory effects and cardiovascular exercise in, and pushing your heat tolerance and endurance. (A rare consensus opinion of both your mainstream medicine and new age pseudoscience.)

It's also one of the last truly public forums in our society. A real community meeting place, face to face, totally cross-cultural and intergenerational, a place where total strangers can feel free to strike up conversations about anything, from work to hobbies and politics, life stories and philosophies. An ancient tradition. Through bathhouses and sweat lodges. Some of the best talks of my life have been inside a sauna. Not just a place for personal well being, but for a healthy society also.

#### **CLOSURES**

*But there is a crisis in Victoria sauna-going.* When I pitched JP and DESTROYED the idea of writing a report on greater Victoria

drop-in saunas - rec centers, none of that \$100 spa bullshit - I was living near Oak Bay Rec and frequenting that sauna, just thinking it'd be nice to get out and see some more. Well just then, as of Aug. 11th 2025, the Oak Bay sauna went out of operation, and at the time of writing, (Sept. 9th, 2025) is still out of order, with OBR staff only able to repeat (as they have all month) that they are "waiting for parts" and "haven't got a timeline". How long can a shipping estimate take? What are they hiding?

Oak Bayers are now split between Crystal Pool and Gordon Head. In my experience of the opposite exodus, Oak Bay became totally overloaded when Crystal Pool went down for renos in 2021. Add to that Commonwealth's recent sauna closure, which will stay in effect till the end of Oct., *and now* Esquimalt's closure as of September 7th till October 1st, (I didn't know it but I was there on the last night it would be open) and you start to see the traffic problem.

This gave me no choice but getting out to try some different saunas, (never making it as far as Juan de Fuca or Panorama Rec, which maybe if my friggin Pathfinder wasn't acting up, I would have, but I also think were fair to skip in looking at saunas of Victoria proper...) but also put into perspective the kind of sauna catastrophe that lay in wait for this city like the earthquake waiting to swallow Victoria whole. As many of you know, Crystal Pool still faces a planned (as of a public referendum in favor of the loan required) but time-indefinite, *multi-year closure* for a



major renovation project, due to its energy inefficiency as reportedly, one of the least sustainable buildings in the city, an issue visibly campaigned on in the last election, which would leave the Downtown, North Park, and Hillside/Quadra communities stranded for direct rec center access. (This is not to dispute the energy inefficiency of Crystal Pool, but to consider the issue from the perspective of population.) Meanwhile, the Downtown YMCA, never exactly a drop-in, with a \$15 day use, but good for an affordable monthly pass and serving a large enough population of Downtowners is slated to close “early 2026 or sooner”, and re-open in the Bay Centre *without* a pool or sauna, making for *yet another* mass exodus and dispersal between Esquimalt, Oak Bay, and Gordon Head. Now GH can take the strain of a closed Oak Bay and Commonwealth for the short term, but what happens when the YMCA population is uprooted, Crystal Pool closes for the immediate future, and someone pours another Nalgene full of water on the Gordon Head electric heater, or really *any* pool shuts down for their yearly scheduled maintenance?

Gordon Head’s not going to be big enough to clean up after that mess. Saunas will be packed. People will be turned away from sauna doors. Vulnerable populations like the elderly who rely on saunas for cardiovascular health may begin experiencing higher rates of heart attack and stroke, even death. Will Parks and Recreation have anything to say then?

### **A COUPLE MORE WORDS...**

But I am not really here for doomsaying, or for giving anything like a solution. That’s all just something I thought worth putting at the start of this Victoria sauna State of the Union address, from one sauna goer to

another. Really this was an excuse for me to give all these saunas all a couple tries again. And I got some nice data out of it. Like Commonwealth is the city’s hottest sauna. And Esquimalt is the cheapest. Stuff like that. I’ve also tried to report on the character of each sauna, the kind of mood and culture each one has, as subjective and variable, and maybe illusionary as that is. A different day of the week, a different time, a different crowd, a differently working piece of equipment, can all completely change a sauna session. Still, I hope I’ve been able to get at something true in each, and maybe in writing can inspire someone to check out a different sauna than they’re used to.

Plus at the end, you can find a conversation between me and Catherine Kavelaars on leaving Esquimalt Rec the night of September 6th, 2025, an interview with Matson Lalor on building his own wood burning, trailer-mounted sauna, and a short report on my experience trying it.

## **THE SAUNAS**

### **GORDON HEAD REC**

**Avg. temp 80°C**

**Capacity ~20**

**\$7.50 drop-in**

Gordon Head sauna is a classic you can't go wrong with. Average running temp across two visits was 78-81°C, (172-177°F) with an average of about 80, which is a *solid* heat for a room as large as it is. 15 minutes is a doable session at this heat, 30 is pushing my limit.

Like all the public dry saunas in town, you can expect the traditional cedar siding and tiled floor. (The one exception being Commonwealth's kinda sandblasted pool deck floor.)

GH runs two large electric heaters, one 9kw Homecraft H-Series (\$1415) and one 12kw Homecraft F-Series (\$2000) and seats approximately 20 people on 3 tiers of bench running along the main wall, and 2 tiers of bench on the short (good use of space) side of the L-shape. The door closes nice and quickly so as to maximize the preservation of heat. As expected of Victoria rec centers, a lifeguard checks on the sauna every 15 minutes, unfortunately letting heat out as they do.

Two windows, one on the door and one besides with views out across the hot tub to the far wall and leftwards to the lazy river pool. There's a clock in the window for keeping time, but as remarked by a fellow sauna goer during the writing of this report and personally confirmed, the glare of the two interior lights on the glass can make it difficult to read from certain parts of the room. The temp is read on a small thermometer hung by the door, but no humidity meter.

Crowdedness around dinner time was Not Very, averaging about 5 people at a time with plenty room to spread out and do stretching. At other times though, I've seen this place pretty near capacity and chatty as hell. Without even a "keep conversation quiet" sign, this sauna encourages a conversational culture, and other than running into friends from the GH I've also been witness to some pretty deep talks among strangers here, from experimental cancer treatments to spirituality. This sauna has only one posted rule: no pouring water on the electric element.

There's no water bottle filling station, but the cold shower right beside the sauna doubles cryotherapy and bottle filler in a pinch. Otherwise there is a drinking fountain nearby for a slow trickle fill.

### **OAK BAY REC**

**Avg. temp est. 80°C**

**Capacity ~20+**

**\$7.50 drop-in**

Unfortunately OBR did not re-open over the course of this report. But living off Foul Bay for the last 2 years I have had the opportunity to get pretty familiar with it.

I *think* it runs on two medium electric heaters, and though it has a thermometer inside, I never thought before starting this article to check it. I would guess it usually runs about as hot as GH: around 80°C, (though this could change with the new parts when it finally comes back into operation.) 20 minutes is a good standard session for me in this sauna, but 30 minutes has also seemed easy enough at times. Like GH, this sauna has a clock visible from inside. It also has a cold shower, and a good water bottle filler nearby.

But really, this is a great social sauna. Very conversational, loud even. It's

steady around dinnertime, probably averaging around 6-8 people, but can get extremely busy later into the night, often packing its 3-tiers of seating full and going through its standing room also. It is easily the highest capacity sauna in Victoria, with a 3-tier bench facing a deep 2-tier bench on the other side, (offering an in-between height to tiers 2-3 on the main walls) which points to a direct correlation between capacity and chattiness - something natural about sharing silences with smaller groups and breaking conversations with big ones.

I've had some good talks here, and heard the most conversations about *career* and *occupation* at this sauna. Maybe it's the aspirational culture of a rich neighborhood like Oak Bay in general. Paramedics in training discussing accreditation, small business owners comparing notes, and older teens coaching younger teens on taking an apprenticeship. One older guy who's always there talking about his sailboat I saw hire someone on the spot to come work for him. Other memorable conversations have been a spontaneous group discussion of alcoholism and drinking habits, and a kind of quizzing back and forth between two old head history buffs on Hypatia and The Library of Alexander.

## **COMMONWEALTH CENTRE**

**Avg. temp 85°C**

**Capacity ~10**

**\$7.50 drop-in**

Commonwealth is a place of excess. With its competition pool, high dives, and big, high truss and glass ceilings it feels halfway between a water park and an airport. Given all that, its rinky dink looking sauna seems initially like an afterthought. It's small, weirdly shaped (a 13-sided room) and awkward for it, where much of the lower of

two tiers of bench seating is awkwardly close to the fencing around the heater, leaving knees cramped and the walkway to the far corner blocked. (Personally, for longer sessions, I like having both higher and lower benches available for cycling high and low intensity intervals.) 3 windows give a wide open view of the pool (and many other storeys of Commonwealth action) and clocks are visible both inside and outside the room.

But to get to the meat and potatoes here, for the smallness of the room its one large 12kw heater (brand and model unknown) gets the room up to a friggin *toasty* 88°C, ranging from 81-88°C, (177-190°F) and an officially posted temp of 85°C, (185°F) even with lifeguard checks every 15 minutes. This is easily read on an interior thermometer which also shows humidity at around 25%, traditional dry saunas aiming for between 5-15%, though rec center saunas averaging closer to 40%, and 25% being the lowest I found in Victoria. 88°C was also the hottest I found in Victoria, and sure *felt it*, a 20 minute session leaving me lightheaded and spacey cooling off in a lounge chair outside after— properly cooked, just what you sometimes want from a sauna. (The cold shower nearby might be especially enjoyed after a good cook as this.) Really on pure numbers, from a view of pure heat, this is *the best sauna in Victoria*. It just doesn't feel like an especially friendly one. Which is maybe right in line with Commonwealth's athletic image — a sauna for competitive brooding before and after dives or races: no place for small talk.

The sauna was averaging about 8 people during my dinnertime session, which was already pushing the benches' capacity, with 2 of those 8 people choosing to stand to give everyone their space. Really packing people in, I think this sauna might be able to

sit 12 people, but I sorta doubt it often gets there. Even so, I've already started to recognize some regulars here, mostly older folks, and I'm sure once this place re-opens, now that I've moved to Swan Lake area, I'll get a better chance to see the Commonwealth community.

## **CRYSTAL POOL**

**Avg. temp 77°C**

**Capacity ~12**

**\$6.63 drop-in**

Crystal Pool is a classic. With its big dome roof it's a Victoria icon, looking like a mall from the 1980s, and on the edge of Downtown, serving a number of neighborhoods, it's home to one of the most eclectic rec center cultures. Aggro pickup basketball, dudes wearing jeans in the weight room, (which has a big weird aquarium window onto the lanes pool) a whiteboard of word puzzles by the hot tub, and a sauna with signs to "KEEP CONVERSATION QUIET" which in my experience makes for an all or nothing kind of meditation mood, or total freak conversation. It's also notably cheaper than most places in town, at the weird price of \$6.63, second only to Esquimalt's non-weird \$6.50. I lived just a couple blocks away from here on Wark for 2 years and frequented the hell out this place, got to know the regulars, and had some of the best conversations I ever did in a sauna. More on that later.

But to get down to business, Crystal Pool is a *just* below-average on temp, running a consistent 77°C and 78°C (170-172°F) on two visits, and both times reading 54% humidity. (I was unable to identify the make, model, or kilowattage of the heater.) Yet it was still called "gutless" by one GH regular even as GH was running just a degree over Crystal Pool's average as

he said it. Crystal's reputation unfairly in disrepair. In my opinion, Crystal's 77°C is a perfect moderate heat. You can last long enough to feel like your session is really getting there, but you're gonna hopefully be kinda zapped and lightheaded when you leave too.

(I'm sentimental though, and this is the sauna that really got its hooks in me and got me going regular, trying to see how long I could push my sessions.)

This sauna's a solid medium in terms of square footage, maybe a capacity of 12 seated— there were 10 of us comfortably spread out last I was there, with nobody resorting to standing when I went around dinnertime, (though going in the past in periods of unemployment this was often a fairly low key sauna, even as the pool was full of people.)

Crystal has your classic rectangular layout, wood siding and tile floor. No clock inside this sauna, but 2 clocks visible from a seated position through the window, one analog and one digital, (with both set a few minutes apart when I was last there, so be sure to remember *which* clock you took your initial time from) but also and especially cool about this place, a nice sand hourglass style timer on the wall, a piece of wood you flip to start counting up to 15 minutes, white sand steadily trickling down, filling a vial marked out in 5 minute intervals. And not to blow anyone's job up, but in my last couple sessions here, about 30 minutes each, not one lifeguard check. Which sucks if you're some geezer ready to slump over in there alone, but for my money, was nice to keep the heat.

It'd be wrong not to go into detail on some of Crystal Pool's sauna talk though. For sure some of the folks I ran into here were a big part of my coming back again and again and making a habit out of the

sauna. I loved to hear everyone's perspectives. And usually, the crazier the better. There were a couple true crime or serial killer obsessed guys I had the bad luck of sharing a sauna with once, but mostly it's all been good experiences. Two that stick in my mind from years back:

One) a long talk with an old head Victoria punk, one of whose old friends from the scene it turned out I'd planted trees a couple seasons with, and who gave me a lot of perspective and genuine encouragement on my then-new pursuit of concert videography, saying something like, all the shows you record, everything you archive it all gets more important with time.

And two) a geezer and 1 of the only 2 people I've ever met to have actually lived through the end of the Soviet Union, and the only 1 of 2 to have spoken of it fondly, going as far to say he preferred living under Soviet communism to the way he lives in the west now. And then followed up with the off-handed claim that *solar power energy was not free*, and was in fact *draining the sun of its energy*. These are the takes I come here for.

## **ESQUIMALT REC**

**Est. ~75°C**

**Capacity ~14**

**\$6.50 drop-in**

Esquimalt has been the sleeper hit for me, living so much nearer the Saanich core options. Some good stuff off the bat: it's the cheapest in town at \$6. for drop-in, (some regulars mentioned "toonie nights" but can't find anything about it online) and it's open latest, going till 10:30pm Monday-Sunday, where most other pools in town close at 10pm latest, and often earlier on Sundays. This was actually what first got me out here,

looking for a pool when I needed a tub *bad* late one night.

And though this isn't really supposed to be about the merits of these rec centers in general, Esquimalt also has a pretty unique feature in its salt water pool— for real the lazy river pool is salt water, and it's awesome. There are maybe some health benefits? like for your skin and muscles, due to minerals in the water, but I don't know really how substantiated. Either way it's pretty cool. You're more buoyant in salt water, and they keep the water warm, so it's a nice one to float in.

Now, *the sauna*— The room runs one 21kw Saunacore ULTIMATE electric heater, (\$4,450) possibly the most expensive unit in the city, but surely not running it at its full heating potential. 3 signs in the room indicate no water on the element. (A typed note on the door says last time the sauna was wrecked it was out of service for 4 days and cost \$5000 to replace.) There's no thermometer in Esquimalt's sauna, so I can only estimate the temp. But in two sessions this month I spent 30 and 45 minutes respectively, and neither felt like truly hitting my limit. It was hot in there, for sure, but it was never unbearable. (Lifeguard came only once each session.) And after getting out, even after 45, I still wasn't near as zapped as I got from 20 minutes in Commonwealth's high 80s°C, while at Gordon Head, consistently around 78°C, I am hitting my limit at 30 minutes, which all leads me to estimate Esquimalt could be running somewhere in the high 60s°C to mid 70s°C range. (~149°F-167°F.)

So the coldest running of Victoria rec center saunas. But is that necessarily a bad thing? If you're using the sauna primarily for anti-inflammatory or detoxification reasons, a long, sustained exposure to heat and

consistent sweat that doesn't send you running for cool air might be exactly what you need. People use sauna hats for that same reason, (wool hats of Finnish and Slavic origin that keep the head cool and I've been told can greatly extend the length of your session.)

So not only is Esquimalt's low temperature not *that bad*, it might actually be *best in show* for a certain type of long duration sauna-going. If there's anywhere I'd go to confidently try for an hour session, it would be here.

And I mean, based on the conversation in there Saturday night, a lot of people see the sauna more as a place for social gathering than a means of physical therapy.

Significantly there's no visible clock inside, except out in the pool proper and visible at an angle, standing right up against

the door-window, which kinda sucks in one light, and in another, lets you get lost more easily in the session by not thinking so much about how long you've been there.

This sauna's pretty high capacity even with its single 3-tier bench, seating about 14 people comfortably, though the room including standing users packed up to 17 when I was there a couple hours before closing on Saturday night. (One regular reports seeing it fit up to 19 people.) I also think if everyone was sitting cross legged, rather than all the tier 3 sitters turning tier 2 into their legroom (this 3 tiered sauna was functioning essentially as 2 tiers, which is notably not what I see at GH or OBR) you might be able to seat a whole nother row of people, and raise the capacity to 20 or so. But probably not a popular option. It's not a huge room, but it makes good use of space. Classic cedar siding and tile floor. 2 lights.



**A CONVERSATION**  
***with Catherine Kavelaars***  
***on leaving Esquimalt***  
***Rec, 06.09.25***

[10:18pm]

**TEMPURATURE**

JL: (...) Even though there's no thermometer, I think it's the coldest in town.

CK: Yeah. You lasted a really long time.

JL: Yeah. 45 minutes.

CK: I lasted longer than I usually do too.

CK: Did you have a goal of 45 minutes?

JL: No I just wanted to see how long I could comfortably go, in order to see what the sort of upper limit on it was, and I think getting out after that 45 minutes was not as cooked as 20 at Commonwealth.

CK: So that's a pretty significant difference in temperature.

JL: I don't know because if Gordon Head is 78-80 and Commonwealth is 88 — what do you think?

CK: I think it was colder than both. I think that was the coldest one.

JL: Like how much lower? What would you estimate? I was thinking like 75? but would 3 degrees be that much difference?

CK: I mean it was still like, hot. It still made me sweat. I can't really estimate degrees.

But I really enjoyed that sauna. I liked being able to sweat for a little while. I feel like I don't sweat the same amount in a hotter sauna if I don't stay as long.

JL: True that's a good point. Yeah maybe if you're going for a detoxification maybe you do want a longer slower cook.

CK: Yeah. It was funny how those teenagers were talking about the detox effect, when one of them was like what does this even *do*? You just *sit* in here?

JL: Yeah it seemed like it was a couple of those guys first time in the sauna, which is pretty funny.

CK: But one of them was like a sauna pro.

JL: Yeah.

(...)

[10:27pm]

**TRAFFIC**

CK: It felt like busy. I think there was people outside who wanted to come in but it was too busy for them.

JL: Yeah I saw a couple people turn away. Saturday night.

CK: When I was over in the hot tub area I looked over and saw like, you know the group of teen boys who was in there. I saw like some of their friends arrive and like the whole group standing outside the sauna door like there was too many of them to all fit and then like about half went in and the other half just kept standing outside.

(...)

**PASSAGE OF TIME**

JL: No clock visible unless you're right at the window.

CK: It kind of created an opportunity for strangers to start to talk to each other though, and ask the time.

JL: I *was* asked the time on the way in.

CK: Yeah.

JL: And actually cause I said it out loud to those guys it stuck in my head it was 8:59 when we came in.. And maybe it's nice, you can kind of get lost in it more when you can't check the time.

CK: Oh yeah. I think it's at Oak Bay if you're sitting at the window seat you just can't help but see the clock, there's even like, multiple clocks visible, and yeah I've always like— the seconds are ticking by slow. So maybe it's kind of cool.

JL: What did you think about the hourglass at Crystal Pool?

CK: I *loved* it.

JL: I loved it too!

CK: It was too hot for me in there like I would have left sooner but I wanted to wait until the sand ran out. I was like, sweating and uncomfortable, and itching to leave— but I was waiting for the sand. And I think the guy beside me might have been in the same situation actually. The first probably 10 minutes kind of flew by and I wasn't even paying attention to it. And then when I wanted to leave but I had *the goal*, that's when I started to watch the sand trickle.

JL: Whenever I set a goal in the sauna it's like that thing with running. feeling long in the end.

(...)

### **CAPACITY**

JL: It's three tiers in there. But everyone was using it as if it was two. The second bench was not being used.

CK: There was only really room for people's feet.

JL: Sometimes though, I don't know if it's just like longer benches, and more wide open, more people take the second bench because they're further from people's feet. But other rec centres, you see people on all three levels.

CK: Yeah that's true like Oak Bay.

JL: But that was definitely, like a two level thing.

CK: I think it was like, a little narrower.

JL: Narrower benches.

CK: I think maybe.

(...)

### **COMMUNITY**

CK: It just feels like a good vibe, socially, in there. I'm just kind of like, feeling like it was very natural and communal for us humans to all be sitting in a hot room together chatting.

JL: It was a nice crowd in there too.

CK: I liked that one guy who was sitting next to me on the top. He had that story about someone pouring water on the heater and saw like an electric spark. He said if you go to one you can pour water on it's awesome cause it can jump like 10 or 15 degrees just by pouring water.

JL: Yeah for sure. I think that's why people— if you pour water on that one too it will also get hotter. It just breaks it.

CK: Are there any in town that you can?

JL: I don't think so. I don't think I've ever seen a rec center that allows you to do that. It's all electrical.

CK: I guess like the wood stove one...

(...)

CK: I don't remember where I heard this, maybe a podcast. It's like, people in Finland being the happiest people on the planet or something. They were attributing part of the reason how popular saunas are because saunas are really good for your health *and* when you're in a sauna you're in a communal space.

JL: Totally.

CK: You talk to people who are way outside your cohort. And there's no phones.

JL: I see. I do see people in there listening to headphones but. Noone's scrolling.

CK: Noone's scrolling. I've seen people read in there.

JL: I've seen that a couple times too.

(...)

JL: Just on what you're saying. That one really outgoing guy was saying he comes there for social nourishment. And then this other guy, sometimes he goes there for the physical effects, but other times he'd go for what he called "filling his cup." Which I thought was good. Going there to fill your cup.

CK: Well, there's a lot of people, all on the same wavelength, vibing.

JL: Yeah.

CK: Everyone's in the sauna, trying to get hot.

**AN INTERVIEW**  
***with Matson Lalor,***  
***on building his own***  
***sauna, 07.09.25***

[4:17pm]

***THE PLAN***

JL: Yeah, what made you want to *build a sauna*?

ML: Well, I guess the idea started, I was building a house out in Scotch Creek, which is on Shushwap Lake, and it was November, and it was getting colder every day. And we were doing, like, some pretty long shifts out there, and I feel like the idea of getting home and just, like, taking a bunch of this money that I made and turning it into a sauna was very appealing. And, you know, kept me going through the cold days. I would just think about, like, sitting in the sauna that would soon be, and just kind of brainstorming about how I would do it.

JL: Thinking about getting warm.

ML: Thinking about getting warm. Yeah, that's right.

JL: And were you ever considering other heat sources, or was it always going to be a wood burner?

ML: Well, initially, wood burning was always the main goal. Um, I did see a pretty cheap electric sauna heater float by on marketplace, and I actually bought it because I felt like it was a good deal.

JL: How much was that?

ML: A hundred bucks.

JL: Woah, not bad.

ML: So I was considering the electric, but, I don't know, at the end of the day, it doesn't really make sense to have a sauna on wheels if you've got to plug it in. So wood firing was kind of just the main goal. You know, the challenge that I was worried about with that was just keeping weight into consideration. A big cast iron stove is going to be really heavy. As far as the trailer goes, how do you like, secure that to the floor so that it doesn't just tip over or fly somewhere?

JL: Right. Totally. So what was the solution there?

***THE STOVE***

ML: Well, took a long time, but basically I found the right stove. I found a stove that was light enough and small enough but still produces the right amount of heat, I think, for the space. It was hard to find the right stove because either they're huge and they're meant to heat a whole house or they are small and they're used to like, you know, there's really small wood burning stoves that they'll put on a sailboat or use to heat a tent, which I'm like, okay, I don't think one of these little things is going to get a space up to sauna temperatures. So I was kind of flip-flopping back and forth for a while about like, oh, I need a big one. So it'll be too hot. And then I'm like, oh, I need a small one. I think it'll be enough.

JL: Like, so. Yeah. Where'd you find this one?

ML: This one, found it on Marketplace. It's a sort of like midsize. Basically what it is, it's a, it's a, it's a stove that is meant

to heat sort of like a 30 ft Yurt, you know, like tent, like a large space. It was a nice kind of like just middle size, um, found it. It's got like glass on three of the sides as well. Um, which is pretty awesome because you get to see the fire in there. You know, a regular like cast iron, big. So a lot of them don't have the glass on them. So it's hard to monitor how your fire is doing and stuff.

JL: That's pretty cool. Is there any way to make steam with this kind of stove? Like there's no hot rocks, right?

ML: For sure. So the plan is to go down to the beach, get a bunch of rocks, ideally, um, cook them in some kind of like bonfire outside to kind of weed out the ones that are going to explode or crack. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Because like you don't want to just pick them up, uh, cause they can just go on you.

JL: Fuck! I didn't even think of that.

ML: Yeah, yeah. So the idea was, you know, maybe go to Sombrio or something, pick up a bunch of rocks, next morning, take the survivors. Um, and then I bought like a super used, um, like Dutch oven pot. And the idea is put the rocks in the pot on top of the stove and then you can pour water on the rocks in there. And then, you know, you don't have hot water going directly onto the stove, um, which I feel like that heat differential could be bad for it, and just like drips on the glass. I'm worried about that cracking.

JL: Right. So yeah, well, rocks in a Dutch oven. That's cool as

hell. That sounds like a pretty good system.

ML: Yeah, for sure. And I've used it so far without the rocks and just the Dutch oven. And I mean, it was pretty successful. Got it steamy in there for sure.

JL: Oh, cool.

ML: Yeah. And just pour a little, let it get hot and then pour, pour some water in there and get some, you know, get some oils.

JL: Oh yeah. What kind of oil do you like using? Um, I got no experience with that because I only really use the rec center saunas, but I've heard people talk about it. I'm just curious.

ML: My brother went to that like, floating boat sauna place in Victoria, [HAVN Saunas] and he was talking about how they had all these different oils, like eucalyptus and whatnot. I've only ever used thieves oil, just cause we just had it in the house. It's kind of a bit of a blend of oils, I think.

JL: Gotcha. And what does that do? I don't, I don't actually know. Is it for like your respiratory or..?

ML: I'd say, you know, for me, I would just call it ambiance, or atmosphere. I do think probably that, uh, some people would claim, you know, oils would do good things for you, but I don't know enough about that.

## **2-YEAR BUILD**

JL: Sure, okay, I got you. So how long did it take to do the sauna build start to finish?

ML: Well, honestly here, let me look at calendar here because

this was like the slowest tiny project. It was just on the back burner for so long. And, you know, I would get stuck with, I would call it indecision in the design phase. And I was sort of designing it as I was building it. I had a rough idea, but you know, I wasn't sure what kind of stove I was going to be able to get. And you know, I wasn't quite sure about like, you know, how, I dunno, there was just, just problems about like, how am I going to like secure it to the trailer? Um, you know, what is my bench layout going to be, you know, how, how, how am I going to try to like space out these benches? That's another thing I was thinking about. Even so far as like, what's, you know, safety wise, how far away, how much clearance do I got to give the stove? Which way should the door swing? You know, when you go to like a rec center, all those doors swing outwards. I think the idea there is that, you know, if you're like in the sauna, you're like, oh shit, I'm about to pass out. You can stagger, you can fall into the door and, you know, you can fall out. True. If it's an in swing, if you like passed out right in front of the door, then you're, you know, like your body would stop a lifeguard or somebody else from like getting in, and getting you out the door and stuff.

JL: Oh shit.

ML: So I was like, oh, should I make it swing in? Okay. I was like, okay, I could have it swing out. But also like, I still got to build some kind of stairs for it. It's like you're on a trailer. If you like swing out, then it's, you got kind of like a, you know, two foot draw, you know, to the ground. I got to build some steps for that.

ML: Um, okay, here, let me, let me look at a calendar here and figure out my timeline. (...) Oh, actually, no, here we go. Um, I got, I just found a picture here. I was starting to sort of get the initial frame of the sauna. Um, December 2022. Okay. (...) So what does that make that? Two, two, two and a half years, maybe.

JL: Whoa.

ML: Yeah. But again, yeah, it was just like on the back burner for so long. A lot of it was just trying to find, you know, the right stuff. I was trying to do it. Um, I don't know, reuse materials and stuff, find some, you know, cheap.

## **COST & MATERIALS**

JL: If you're ok sharing, how much did it all cost? Do you, do you know an exact price or..?

ML: Yeah, here I got a spreadsheet somewhere. I feel like I stopped adding to it at some point... It was probably, I think it was probably close to. I guess probably close to \$3,500. All in.

JL: Not bad. Do you think that was mostly, um, was that mostly the cost of wood, I guess.

ML: You know what I got. Um, What do I have somewhere I have a list at some point. I think that trailer and stove was probably \$1800 bucks there. I got a lot of the wood from, I found a guy who operated a little, uh, like, you know, milling, out near Sooke. He gave me a pretty good deal. I found him right at the beginning. And he gave me a pretty good deal. On a bunch of the wood that I used

just for, he had a bunch of off cuts that were kind of like, it's called it under six feet of like one by four cedar. Basically just a bunch of cedar that was too short to know the fence. Right. And yeah, he gave me this big bundle for like a hundred bucks. And that was like, that wraps the whole exterior of the sauna and other little parts here and there. bigger sort of posts and beams that went into the, you know, structure of it and the roof. And oh yeah, and all like the interior benches and stuff like that.

JL: Wow. Nice.

ML: Yeah, he saw the vision. I think he wanted to support it, so.

### ***SLOW BURNER***

JL: Cool. Do you know how hot it runs usually? I guess that can be pretty variable with the woodburning.

ML: Yes. You know, I've only recently got a thermometer for it. I think we got it to. We for sure. I for sure got it to. 45 celsius. I forget even how that goes as far as saunas go.

JL: Yeah, most of the rec center ones are around here running at like 78 or so.

ML: Yeah. So it's not as hot as them. But I feel like just based on feeling of the sauna, I have had it hotter in there. I just didn't have a thermometer. But it's basically like a longer sauna experience. It's like, you know, you set it up, you get the fire going, you lose a bunch of air when everybody comes in. But you just get everybody in and it's more like the ideal way is more of like an hour long experience. You know, you get in, you put a

bunch more wood on the fire, and you try not to open that door. And I mean, it's funny. People would come in and try it and they'd be like, oh, this thing is not hot. Like, I don't know, it's really kind of just *warm*. And then, you know, by the end, you know, people are swallowing their words, like eventually somebody's like, oh, I think I'm going to get out, it's pretty hot. And everybody's like, oh, yeah, I think so too.

JL: It's a slow burn.

ML: It's a slow burn, which, you know, I kind of like like the experience of that. And, you know, it fits the wood burning nature of it. It's not like, you know, all in one go. It's like, all right. Yeah, it's the whole process.

JL: Yeah. My buddy had a sauna he built on Gabriola. And my memory of that was like we sat in there for almost like, I don't know, two hours, and just drank beers and shot the shit like. It's a totally different thing than going to Commonwealth for a quick sauna after a swim.

### ***FINNISH RULES***

ML: Yeah. It's a completely different thing. You know, what's an interesting thing is so I found this article before I started building it. I was basically just trying to plan out how I was going to build it. I'm just reading about saunas and whatnot. And I found this article written by the Finnish Sauna Society or something like that. And then a whole bunch of like a whole bunch of rules about, you know, what makes a sauna good or what makes a sauna a sauna at all. Okay. And a funny little quote

that they had in there is they were like 99.9 percent of saunas in North America are garbage. And last point-zero-one percent. They're even worse. They basically said that no sauna in North America is a sauna. We have no idea what we're doing. It's just an abomination.

JL: What do you think about about that? Are they like, do they know something we don't or are they full of it?

ML: You know, I'll have to go there and compare with Finland sometime and see if they're all that. Yeah. It's definitely a bold statement.

JL: It's a crazy statement.

ML: Yeah. After reading, you know, reading some of this rules that they had about how to make a sauna good. It was interesting. They were talking a lot about having proper sort of ventilation and airflow into the sauna. So you don't actually want to have, you know, the same air. It seems like you would want to like, keep it enclosed to keep it hot. But they say, you know, you want fresh air coming in. And if you do that right, you can actually be comfortable in a hotter sauna. And you can not feel like you're dying. And, you know, they say, oh, the reason you get in a sauna and, you know, you feel like you're like suffocating from the heat. That's not the heat. That's just your sauna has poor ventilation.

JL: Interesting.

ML: Yeah. So that was one thing that they're talking about. They're also talking about rules of sort of the space of the interior of the sauna. That no part of

your body, so not even your feet should be in the bottom one third of the space. Because that's where your cool air is going to cool. No matter how hot it is in the sauna, the bottom third is going to be noticeably cooler than the top. And they had some kind of parameters about like, oh, the temperature between your head and your feet should only be, I forget the number, but it's something like it should only be like three degrees different. So it's pretty precise. I mean, they had it. They're throwing out all these numbers and they had it all down. But, I read all these rules about saunas and then I quickly just realized that I was going to have to break every single one because I was building it on the trailer. And, you know, there's like road height, like limits. It's kind of like that. Alright.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

JL: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, do you have any other thoughts on the whole thing? Just to sort of wrap it up, I've pretty much gone through all my questions there. Yeah, I don't know.

ML: I'd love to build another one. I feel like I learned a lot going through this first one and, you know, just about, there's things that I would do differently with the next one.

JL: Should I plug you? if someone reading this wants to buy a sauna off you?

ML: Uh, yeah, sure. I guess. Yeah I guess throw an email up there. Might as well.  
[lalormatson@gmail.com]

JL: Cool. Do you have a favorite rec center sauna in town?

ML: I think I've only ever done Gordon Head.

JL: It's a good one!

ML: It is a good one. I went to Oak Bay rec one time and like, just was about to go into the sauna and you just, look in and it was just like *bodies*. Maybe it was just the night, but like, it was like, no, you can't even go and stand in there. It was just, it was just at capacity.

JL: Right. You don't want to be in there. Well, cool, man. I'm gonna, I'm gonna have a time, uh, chopping this up, but thanks for, uh, thanks for doing the interview here.

ML: Yeah man, same to you. We gotta get out there and get in it, some point.

JL: Hell yeah.

## **LAST REPORT**

### ***Seshing Matson's sauna, night of 08.09.25***

I did get the chance try Matson's sauna, but unfortunately couldn't line up a night with him before this zine was getting printed. We had a solid group of five to test it out though, and spent well over an hour inside, probably closer to two from starting to make the fire to calling it for the night.

First of all — the thing looks beautiful. My god man. The woodwork looks better than anything in the public pools. It's not huge inside but had more than enough room for us, could fit maybe 7 or 8 people, (though balanced on a trailer you probably wouldn't want to push your luck overloading it) and has its one U-shaped bench opposite a wall with the door and wood burning stove side by side. We laid some tile down around the base of the stove to catch any jumping embers and prevent this dry wood box from going up in flame, something that will eventually be fastened down in place.

I built the fire log cabin style from a pile of scrap wood, and found the stove super easy to get going. In about 15 minutes I was already breaking a sweat. (This was also my first chance to test drive a sauna cap that Cat knitted me from wool.) We opened the door probably more than we should have, but still got the place cooking at over 50 degrees, which was enough to get a serious sweat on without hitting your limit. Like Matson described, this is a sauna to enjoy slow and for its own sake, probably best with friends, not a quick fix tacked onto the end of a workout.

We sat and talked in the dark, warm and sweaty, just a thin wall between that and the cold night outside, and comfy as hell for it. A nice contrast you don't get stepping out the sauna onto a heated pool

deck. We asked things like how friggin nice would this be in the snow? or after a winter surf session?

What I didn't expect was how much this felt like sitting around the campfire, with the stove's flames in front of us and only light in the room, a real familiar kind of communal resting, everyone watching the fire like a prehistoric TV set, and just occasionally stoking it, or throwing some new fuel on. Or throwing some water onto the dutch oven, using a ladle and a small wooden bucket (a couple nice pieces of workmanship themselves there) we filled up on the way in.

By about an hour we were all starting to feel it. I went through my Nalgene a while ago and Cat and Taylor and Amanda had popped out to get some hot-cold going with a garden hose while me and Luc just sat inside drying out. We threw a small pile of wood on just a couple times throughout and the fire never died. When we finally called it we left the door open and let the stove burn on to evaporate and dry all that moisture and stuff back out.

It's a beautiful machine Matson's put together here, and crazy to think of the potential once he gets it driving around. I don't know if it's a real easy recommendation to the reader to go and build yourself a sauna of your own for when your local rec center inevitably closes, but shit— for those who have the means, it's a pretty fucking cool alternative.

*John Ledingham,  
09.09.25*

## A Ranked List of 101 Albums I Love (at 30)

by JP Meldrum

There is a cool-guy way to write one of these lists; in which I scrape the most obtuse experimental records from the back of my cerebellum and present a randomly selected John Wiese record on a pee-tree dish next to the ectoplasm of *A Love Supreme*, but that would be in bad faith, definitively pretentious, and, frankly, untrue<sup>4</sup>. Most of these records, I've spent the better part of my life with; I did my best to avoid recency bias and de facto cultural ubiquitous inclusions, however, a quick scan of this list begets accusations of /mu/ core and 2010s *Pitchfork* essentialism - what can I say? I was shaped by those lists.

I made an all-time list twelve years ago right when I graduated from high school; all I did in high school was blaze, crush records and make excuses to not do homework. I cut my teeth in the peak of file sharing; a time when you could just type "mediafire" or ".zip" into Google and easily download the album you were looking for; long before streaming reduced the album to novelty. I figured my taste hadn't changed much, though, my overarching favourites may have. It's "matured" as Brian Stubbs told me. Before digging up that high school list - found archived as a much-dated screenshot of an iTunes playlist posted to Facebook circa 2013 that I had made only viewable to me - I wagered it'd be roughly 60% identical; I was wrong; it's about 8% the same. Artists like Death Grips, Between the Buried and Me, J Dilla, Thundercat, Taylor Swift, The Flaming Lips, System of a Down, The Head and the Heart, Jay-Z, Mastodon, Danny Brown, PJ Harvey, MF Doom, Fiona Apple and the Red Hot Chili Peppers have fallen by the way-side in favour of what-I-would-now-call less immediately gratifying records, or, artists I included because I thought girls liked them. Some of these artists I still love, like PJ Harvey and Fiona Apple, fall below the one-hundred album threshold because I've listened to another decade-plus of records<sup>5</sup>. Some are decidedly dated because their given genre has evolved so much - Jay-Z, in my opinion, sounds old as shit now that Drake's instantly gratifying master rap-pop gentrification reigns supreme. Still, Kanye, Coltrane, Davis, D'Angelo, Bon Iver, and Sonic

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<sup>4</sup> For fun, I made one of these cool-guy lists and will be including it in a future issue.

<sup>5</sup> My estimates are about 4000 first-time listens since 2013. This is roughly 1 new album a day for twelve years;. I have phases of listening to 5 new records a day, and phases where I listen to nothing but Pinegrove and Utada Hikaru; I have, however, always listened to more new-to-me music than not. This *Rolling Stones* list got me to a new height of seventeen in a day towards the end. It was a great day, but I got quite the headache during the otherwise great *Superunknown*.



Youth still float high on my list. Some of my favourite bands are completely absent from this current list because their larger oeuvre is what I love about them - not an album in particular - notably, Yo La Tengo doesn't have a certain record I hold supreme - I just love their oeuvre; they're 'shelf stable' across the board the same way the David Bowie was.

Only one record I've included is by someone I know. There are plentiful other locals I considered - Crosss, Sister Blanche, Sixbrewbantha, This is the Glasshouse, Flora Bay<sup>6</sup>, Fascination, This is the Glasshouse, and my own band SCHOOLGIRL rank quite highly amongst my life of listening - but in good faith, I could only include this IO record. It's perfect; a pure expression of self, a unique self, plain and simple. Maxwell Patterson is an island, and an island worth visiting. Virtuosity at its most vernacular. A virtuosity Scaruffi referred to as "drumming apocalypses", that caused a fire-storm of controversy in r/drumming when a fan suggested "he's the best modern drummer in my opinion, absolute shreddage", and is a meme on RateYourMusic because how prolific he once was. Maxwell "IO" Patterson deserves his flowers, and I'm proud to call him, and his record "not all prophecies" singularly genius.

Not a single one of those *Rolling Stones* 500 records managed to enter my list, though it made me reconsider some of my choices. Dylan is absent, namely, and there are some Beatles records other than *The White Album* that could be in contention - but, truthfully, I refuse to be a Rockist.

So, enough housekeeping and loquaciousness; here's to thirty more years of listening...

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<sup>6</sup> Flora Bay never produced a full length, but her two EPs are nothing short of culturally preeminent, and superior confessional singer-songwriter alt-pop that predicated the rise of Phoebe Bridgers, Mitski, and the likes; Kaya is a vastly superior songwriter in terms relatability, humour, and relistenability to her successors.

1. 1. Dirty Sprite 2 - Future
2. Yeezus - Kanye West
3. A Love Supreme - John Coltrane
4. Ghosteen - Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds
5. Kind of Blue - Miles Davis
6. Scott 3 - Scott Walker
7. Jane Doe - Converge
8. Tilt - Scott Walker
9. The Life of Pablo - Kanye West
10. 1996 - Ryuichi Sakamoto
11. BCD - Basic Channel
12. The Power of Failing - Mineral
13. Voodoo - D'Angelo
14. For Emma, Forever Ago - Bon Iver
15. The Blue Album - Weezer
16. Blemish - David Sylvian
17. Is Survived By - Touche Amore
18. Everything So Far - Pinegrove
19. The Shape of Jazz to Come - Ornette Coleman
20. Emotion - Carly Rae Jepsen
21. No New York - V/A
22. The Tired Sounds of Stars of the Lid - Stars of the Lid
23. Single Collection Vol. 2 - Utada Hikaru
24. Untrue - Burial
25. Totem - White Suns
26. Plastic Beach - Gorillaz
27. Take Care - Drake
28. On the Corner - Miles Davis
29. Benji - Sun Kil Moon
30. Tago Mago - Can
31. Tough Love - Jessie Ware
32. A Promise - Xiu Xiu
33. Closing Time - Tom Waits
34. CUTIE MARKS (And the Things That Bind Us) - Vylet Pony
35. Zombie - Fela Kuti
36. Born to Run - Bruce Springsteen
37. Interstellar Space - John Coltrane
38. The Glow Pt. 2 - The Microphones
39. The White Album - Weezer
40. Whole Lotta Red - Playboi Carti
41. Trap Back - Gucci Mane
42. Bitches Brew - Miles Davis
43. Blue - Joni Mitchell
44. Rich Gang - Young Thug & Rich Homie Quan
45. Daydream Nation - Sonic Youth
46. Pinkerton - Weezer
47. Love is Real - John Maus
48. Deathconsciousness - Have a Nice Life
49. Da Drought 3 - Lil Wayne
50. House Arrest - Ariel Pink
51. The Seer - Swans
52. Transylvanian Hunger - Darkthrone
53. Loveless - My Bloody Valentine
54. Meditations - John Coltrane
55. There's a Riot Goin' On - Sly and the Family Stone

56. The Inner Mountain Flame - Mahavishnu Orchestra
57. This Year's Model - Elvis Costello and the Attractions
58. Hounds of Love - Kate Bush
59. Music for 18 Musicians - Steve Reich
60. Young Prayer - Panda Bear
61. In Rainbows - Radiohead
62. Grace - Jeff Buckley
63. On Letting Go - Circa Survive
64. Sung Tongs - Animal Collective
65. POP - Gas
66. Missionless Days - Kepler
67. 21 - Adele
68. A I A: Alien Observer - Grouper
69. Trout Mask Replica - Captain Beefheart
70. The White Album - The Beatles
71. Love Deluxe - Sade
72. not all prophecies - i.o
73. Cruel Optimism - Lawrence English
74. Longhea - Gridlink
75. Venice - Fennesz
76. Exile on Main Street - Rolling Stones
77. Bang & Works Volume 1 - V/A
78. Fun House - The Stooges
79. We are the Pitiless Censor of Ourselves - John Maus
80. What's Goin' On - Marvin Gaye
81. Product - Sophie
82. Pink - Boris
83. Tapestry'd Life - Pretend
84. Naked City - Naked City
85. Cold Visions - Bladee
86. s/t - Women
87. Confessions on a Dancefloor - Madonna
88. Far Side Virtual - James Ferraro
89. Chemtrails Over the Country Club - Lana Del Rey
90. The Heart of the Congos - The Congos
91. Heavy Weather - Weather Report
92. Daytona - Pusha T
93. Graceland - Paul Simon
94. If You're Feeling Sinister - Belle and Sebastian
95. s/t - Whitney Houston
96. MTV Unplugged - Alice in Chains
97. From Here We Go Sublime - The Field
98. Number 1 Angel - Charli XCX
99. Selected Ambient Work Volume 1 - Aphex Twin
100. Hold Your Horse Is - Hella
101. Keep Bein' Awesome - The Very Nice Interesting Singer Man

## **How to Run an Underground Movie Theatre**

by Nick Workman

My first illegal movie theatre was in the basement of a record shop in Toronto. I was 25 and I had recently moved to the city in the hopes of landing a job in TV. Where I ended up though was bussing tables and sleeping in a mutual friend's closet on top of patio furniture. I had no money to my name for groceries, let alone a movie ticket, especially a ticket at the Cineplex or TIFF Lightbox. Though Marvel and YA films were dominating the box office, I could hardly care less. My interest in YA never piqued past Harry Potter, and with my core group of nerd friends now dispersed from the university campus, the fun of a Marvel film had faded.

I told myself my love of film still remained, but with disinterest in the current box office and struggles with money, it hardly seemed pressing to save my loonies for a movie ticket, and so it took a backseat. Instead, I did what many young people in a city do, walk around, browse shops, and rack up debt trying to keep up - with most of my money going toward booze.

It was a lonely time in the city. Though I had girlfriends and saw friends, it was difficult to manage a life full of meaning when all you're doing is trying to survive. A restaurant job bussing tables, where the dreaded cl-open awaits you every Sunday brunch, is hardly a payoff for the culture and acceptance of a city that one cannot afford. Though I kept telling myself I was working towards something, I didn't know what that was or who I was working towards.

I heard from a friend that Justin Chasty had moved to Toronto and was working at Sonic Boom. Justin and I had met the first week of university. Him, with his mutton chops, and me, with my nose and arm piercings, quickly became friends over our shared love of rock music, film, and hot wings. We were a likely pair on the conservative campus of Western University. Where many students were partying on Friday nights, Justin and I would instead spin records in our dorm room or attend a film club screening. It was with him that I first saw *Eraserhead* - a movie that I had been trying to find since I heard about surrealism at 13. It was these moments that cemented our friendship, the allowance and sharing of what we loved with each other.

We met less often after that first year of university. Girlfriends, different classes, and living off campus meant that we had less time to meet up. Though when we did, it

was always to share what we loved with each other - film and music over a plate of hot wings.

When I graduated from university, I decided to stick around in London, Ontario for a year. I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I decided to bum around and party. I got a job working as a short order cook at a pub. On my days off I would party with my friends who stuck around. There wasn't much to the parties except drink, drink, drink. I can hardly remember a conversation I had during those times, other than embarrassing ones.

Justin had also decided to stick around, but unlike me, he saw something bigger in getting people together. Whereas I saw it as a good hang that was filled with drinks, he saw it as an exchange - a place where one could share what they loved with one another and discover what they didn't know. This is what prompted him to create Vinyl Night in his year after university - where every Thursday, he would bring his turntable and speakers to a bar and let patrons play one side of a vinyl. People would gather of all stripes, no music was unwanted, and play whatever their heart desires. There was judgement, of course, but always in the best way; in a way that prompted discussions, of arguing why black metal deserves respect or how tongue in cheek

Randy Newman really was. Every Thursday, we would gather and share what we loved with strangers who became friends.

If I look back now, Justin was always doing these kinds of things; he had done campus radio to discover and share songs, he had worked in record shops to help people find new music, and he had organized movie nights at his place to show you the latest thing he found that he thought you too must see. These were some of the best moments of my time in London, and so when I heard Justin was in Toronto, I knew I had to seek him out.

I, of course, was worried. I had met up with a few, former friends from University during my time in Toronto, only to find that without the mutual campus grounds before us, we didn't have much in common. Would meeting Justin also reveal that we had grown further apart than I thought?

I decided to stop in at Sonic Boom to see him, and it was just like old times. Walking around the store with him as he restocked records, he would stop and say "You should check this out. It's crazy!" or "I'm not a fan of their follow-up," or "This film has the best kill." I missed this. This exchange of someone sharing what they love with me and me taking it in. It reminded me of why I loved film and music - the exchange.

As it came time for me to head to my night shift, Justin told me he had a new idea. He was going to turn the basement of the record shop into a movie theatre. I couldn't fathom how such a thing could happen or work. To me, a movie theatre was big, complex, state of the art. Not some basement next to boxes of records. But this was Justin Chasty, a man who brought people together. He said "You'll come, right?"

A week later, I was lined up with 30 other people, freezing my ass off, outside of a record shop in Chinatown at midnight. Who were these people, these midnight mass goers? As I looked around, I could see who we were. Like the people at Vinyl Night, we were from all walks of life, here to share and experience what we loved with each other.

The doors opened and we were ushered into the basement. Justin had set up chairs, a screen, and an old-school projector. For five dollars, he gave us a movie, popcorn, and two beers. There was no profit to be made, but simply enough to make sure the experience was worthwhile. As he stood in front of the crowd to introduce the movie, he

said "Thanks everyone for coming. I'm really excited you're here." And I was excited to be there.

Over the next few months, I went to every movie night at Sonic Boom. I saw Sisters, Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla, The Gate, and many more, all on film reel. I met people there, debated movies, and found myself again. The city was still hard and I was still broke, but I had found a place to be myself again thanks to my friend.

I no longer live in Toronto, but I've taken the best part of it with me. I run an underground movie theatre because I want to show people films and I want to hear what they have to say - the good, the bad, the boring. I also want people to start showing me films. There are no rules for an underground movie theatre. They should be everywhere and for everyone. Not for profit, but for bringing people together to share what they love. To become friends. My friend Justin showed me that

**Two Poems**  
**by T.C. Francis**

***I***

Shaved daikon  
Flat palm (hard!) or mandolin (scary!)  
An appartiff paired with Korean fried-chicken  
Or a crisp addition to a coleslaw  
With other shaved veggies and fish sauce

***II***

Before the flood  
The dove with broken wings,  
A glass vase,  
A gravid gut.  
She, the 'bird' without (discernible) feathers said  
"Yes," to Hope

What if Noah was a girl from Amherst?  
And what about the big fish  
That swim in the Antarctic red?

After the flood  
The friend of Barthes  
Bestowed upon us  
A triumph of sexual complexity:  
The oeuvre of the egg (not Columbus!)  
The chronicle of insatiable depravity  
The story of the squishy-eyed shepherd  
The bible of the bull and bullock

Modern Times:  
Hallmark came  
I'm buying gifts for Friendsgiving  
Christmas in August  
Hold the applause

Then Play his Secret Chord  
and no one shall shed a tear





















