

August 26, 2008

It's only been a month since my last update, so this may be some kind of record (no pun intended). The list of new items is relatively small, but I was prompted to write not by a new CD but by one of our favorite artists, **Paul Simon**. Simon's 1990 album *Rhythm of the Saints* is one of my Top 10 albums, so it was quite a shock to realize that I failed to give the briefest listen to the albums that came after. He's released three albums in the 18 years since *Saints*, and I knew they existed – I bought the last two for our collection, myself – so I can't explain why it took me so long to discover these truly amazing albums.

Songs from The Capeman is a very engaging album, but is really nothing like his other work as it consists of songs from the musical Simon wrote with the poet Derek Walcott. The songs are about the young boy Salvador Agron who in 1959 killed two teenagers in a gang fight and was, at 16, the youngest person ever sentenced to death by the state of New York (his sentence was later commuted and he served 20 years before being released in 1979, only to die of natural causes by 1986). Many of the songs are quite powerful, but it is a different listening experience as the musical structure requires a different kind of commitment. It's an emotional and compelling story, though it may have been hamstrung by the fact that its protagonist is an unapologetic killer. Still, "Can I Forgive Him?" and "Time is An Ocean" are remarkable songs.

You're the One, from 2000, is just a flat-out terrific record. Recorded with the simple yet intricately layered arrangements that are Simon's trademark, this album contains songs that are startlingly direct in their directness and playfulness. It begins with a beautiful love song called "That's Where I Belong," and some of the tunes that follow such as "Old," "You're the One," and the surprising and perfect performance of "Pigs, Sheep and Wolves" make for an unforgettable album. Whereas he specifically utilized the sounds of South Africa for *Graceland*, and blended West African and South American sounds for *Rhythm of the Saints*, this album moves beyond distinctions to show that Simon has integrated all types of music into his own personal sound. Every song feels timeless and borderless. Basically, I can't believe it took me eight years to find this album.

Finally, his most recent album is *Surprise*, from 2006. This may be the best album Simon has ever created (possibly surpassing my love of *Rhythm*). Brian Eno, best known for being a producer for bands such as U2 and a major force in ambient music, is credited as providing the album's "sonic landscape." What this means will be clear as soon as you press play, but essentially it refers to the swirl and drift of the music, filling the backgrounds with atmosphere and drum beats that have never been found on a Paul Simon album. Tracks such as "Everything About it is a Love Song," "Sure Don't Feel Like Love," and the endlessly re-playable "Outrageous" combine Simon's unique sense of structure and melody with Eno's contemporary and techno stylings. I have had these two albums in constant rotation for nearly a month now, and have yet to grow tired of them. I cannot recommend either record more highly. I hope you give each one a listen, and I hope you are as joyously surprised as I.

As for the new additions, there are lots of great things to listen to, but you may want to pay particular attention to new albums by **Walter Becker, Chris Difford, Loudon Wainwright III, David Byrne, Sugarland**, and **Randy Newman**. I hope you all have a great holiday weekend and a peaceful start to the school year.

Be well,

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| Artist | Title |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Adkins, Trace | American Man: Greatest Hits, Vol. II |
| Adkins, Trace | Greatest Hits Collection, Vol. 1 |
| American Mall | The American Mall |
| Armik | Fuego Gitana: The Nuevo Flamenco Collection |
| Average White Band | Pickin' Up the Pieces: Best of Average White Band |
| Average White Band | Awb |
| Baltimore Consort | Watkins Ale: Music of the English Renaissance |
| Beatles | Abbey Road |
| Becker, Walter | Circus Money |
| Bedingfield, Natasha | Pocketful of Sunshine |
| Bonamassa, Joe | Live from Nowhere in Particular |
| Bowie, David | Live in Santa Monica '72 |
| Bruni, Carla | Comme Si de Rien N'etait |
| Byrne, David | Big Love: Hymnal |
| Capitol Steps | Campaign and Suffering |
| Carthy, Eliza | Dreams of Breathing Underwater |
| Cline, Patsy | Sweet Dreams |
| Clinic | Funf |
| Cyrus, Miley | Breakout |
| Davis, Miles | Collector's Items [Bonus Tracks] |
| Def Leppard | Pyromania |
| Difford, Chris | The Last Temptation of Chris |
| Elergy | Elergy |
| Enigma | LSD: Love, Sensuality and Devotion |
| Foster, Stephen | Songs By Stephen Foster |
| Goodrem, Delta | Delta |
| Gordon, Mike | The Green Sparrow |
| Grieg / Nielsen / Hendricks | Nordic Songs |
| Halter, Ernie | Starting Over |
| Hargrove, Roy | Earfood |
| Hatfield, Juliana | How to Walk Away |
| Jones, George | Burning Your Playhouse Down: Unreleased Duets |
| Mellencamp, John | Life, Death, Love & Freedom |
| Motley Crue | Saints of los Angeles [Explicit Content] |
| Motorhead | The Very Best of Motorhead |
| Newman, Randy | Harps and Angels |
| Oberst, Conor | Conor Oberst |
| Perry, Katy | One of the Boys |
| Rameau, Jean-Phillipe | Ballet Suites |
| Rockabye Baby! | Lullaby Renditions of AC/DC |
| Rodriguez, Carrie | She Ain't Me |
| Rolling Stones | Goats Head Soup |
| Rolling Stones | Black and Blue |
| Rolling Stones | It's Only Rock 'N Roll |
| Rolling Stones | Exile on Main St. |
| Sanborn, David | Here & Gone |
| Soundtrack | Camp Rock |

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| Soundtrack | The Dark Knight |
| Soundtrack | North By Northwest [Varese] |
| Soundtrack | Vertigo [Original 1958 Sountrack] |
| Soundtrack | The Love Guru |
| Soundtrack | Passing Strange [Original Broadway Cast] |
| Soundtrack | Star Wars: The Clone Wars |
| Soundtrack | Tarzan |
| Soundtrack | Vicky Cristina Barcelona |
| Soundtrack | X-Files: I Want to Believe [Score] |
| Springfield, Rick | Venus in Overdrive |
| Springsteen, Bruce | We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions |
| Stewart, Dave | The Dave Stewart Songbook, Vol. 1 |
| Sugarland | Twice the Speed of Life |
| Sugarland | Enjoy the Ride |
| Sugarland | Love on the Inside |
| Various artists | High Lonesome: The Story of Bluegrass |
| Various artists | One Kiss Can Lead to Another: Girl Group Sounds |
| Various artists | Putumayo Presents: Acoustic France |
| Various artists | Rough Guide to the Music of India |
| Various artists | Rough Guide to the Music of the Himalayas |
| Wagner, Richard | Panorama Vol. 2 |
| Wainwright, Loudon III | Recovery |
| Winter, Edgar | Rebel Road |