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Excerpts* from **punkplay.**

gregory s moss

music and time

This is a play in the shape of an old mix tape. Scenes are demarcated by song titles, and the scenes are informed by the songs they are “covering.”

The songs are historically chronological for the most part, but existentially correct in every way. This is pre-internet time, and a song released in '79 (like the light of a distant star) might not reach a kid's suburban ears til '85 or later...

introduction

It's morning in america and that means the 1980s and hey if you don't know anything let me break it down for you:

Imagine you are staring up close n personal between the thighs of a large n hairy man named History. See his asshole? That's the '70s. See his scrote? That's the '90s. Ergo the '80s are that bit of flesh that runs between. You got it. Taint-time.

So let's say you're walkin down the streets of the one-horse town you live in, a one-horse town in a one-horse state in a one horse-country on a one-horse planet in a one-horse universe, it's '83, you're a fucking kid, and among the decade's debris – the Brooke Shields Calvin Klein ads and Reaganomic trickle down bullshit headlines, the silos of missiles capable of killing EVERYONE in the world a thousand times a thousand times a thousand times over –

you find an abandoned cassette tape.

* *Editors' Note: The scenes in punkplay are unnumbered. The section included here is a contiguous excerpt from the middle of the play.*

It's blue, it's plastic, it's home-recorded and bought from Kmart, 60 minutes long and written on the label it says, "dreams are free, motherfucker!" You would pick that shit up, wouldncha?

Yeah - you would n you do. pick it up and take it home and (mom and dad are at work) pop that tape into your second-hand tinny-ass montgomery ward stereo system –

you lie back
you close your eyes
and you listen.

music
the skeleton of music
the music underneath music -
there's music on the tape and its a fucking rash
a red fever dream blur
it's hot and fast and angry and ALIVE
in a way that nothing (NOTHING) you ever seen heard ate or sniffed ever was.
Like maybe the closest thing to it is when your dog had puppies
and you lay down on the kitchen floor and let the whole litter wash over you
all pink tongues wet noses and animal smell.

Like maybe there are other worlds inside this music. Another kind of freedom.

As you listen - the songs are all a minute long the songs are ETERNAL -
you see inside your head a spring time like the one you're living
in a little one horse town in a one horse etc like the one you live in
a little white bedroom where two kids are listening to a record
listening to the same song you're listening to right now.

rise above - black flag (2 minutes 26 seconds)



Duck and Mickey face each other in the center of the room.
Each has a list on white paper.

They are 16.

Mickey's hair is dyed bright red and shaved on the sides.
He wears a torn black suit jacket and tuxedo pants.
Duck's hair is totally shaved and he is wearing red suspenders
over his white t-shirt. Both wear rollerskates.

DUCK:
Ready?

MICKEY:
Go.

DUCK:
"Sun Scorched Manson Boys."

MICKEY:
Too gay. "The Jerk-Offs."

DUCK:
Too stupid. "Reagan Youth."

MICKEY;
Already taken. "Steel Jaw Porno."

DUCK:
Too decadent. "Laser Guided Assholes."

MICKEY:
Too jokey. "White Minority."

DUCK:
Sounds Nazi. "Black Anger."

MICKEY:
Too metal. "Forced to Choose."

DUCK:

Too ambiguous. "The Lazy Farmfucks."

MICKEY:

Too country. "Uncle Wednesday's Good Time Rhythm and Blues Band."

DUCK:

...What?

MICKEY:

I thought people would think it was like a wedding band and they'd hire us and we'd show up and it would be us and we'd like wreck their yuppie good time with our noisy hate music.

DUCK:

Yeah...but the name'd look stupid on a t-shirt.

"The Timeless Deceit."

MICKEY:

Too arty. "Fred Astaire's Angry Asshole."

DUCK:

"The Dog Pud Party."

MICKEY:

"Broken English."

DUCK:

"Royal Pine."

MICKEY:

"Nameless Victims."

DUCK:

"Chokehold Sinatra."

MICKEY:

Not bad...but.

Got any more?

DUCK:

I'm out. You?

MICKEY:

Just one.

"The Zoo Sluts."

The boys look up from their lists,
hold each other's gaze.
Somewhere in the distance we hear the sound of a guitar feeding back.

the final day - young marble giants (2 minutes 6 seconds)



October near Hallowe'en.
Paper pulled away reveals a Jack O'Lantern on the window sill
and brighter autumn leaves in the window.
Duck scrawls SWEET 16 on the wall in black magic marker and exits.
MICKEY is sits on his bed with SUE GIKI.
MICKEY is slightly more punk -
Circle Jerks t-shirt under a plaid shirt, hair a spiky black mop.
SUE is short, Asian, dressed all in black.
Her skin is bad, she wears too much makeup, she's greasy
and smells of menthol cigarettes -
none of which changes the fact that there is something
DEEPLY, ACHINGLY
sexy about her.

SUE wears rollerskates.

They sit in awkward silence, side by side, not looking at each other.
MICKEY slowly inches his leg towards hers.
SUE retracts.

Then abruptly, without looking at him,
SUE puts an arm around MICKEY's shoulders.
More awkward silence.

MICKEY:
Um. So hey. I'm really glad you decided to come over -

SUE GIKI:
Shhhhh.
I'm into CB.

MICKEY:
Oh. Yeah?

SUE GIKI:
My dad has an old CB radio in the basement.

MICKEY:

Oh.

SUE GIKI:

Yeah.

And I like to talk on it late at night when everyone is asleep.

I go down to the basement
in my nightgown
and talk to truckers on the CB.

MICKEY:

Uh - "neat."

What do you say?

SUE GIKI:

I say:

"10-4 Good Buddy"

and

"Watch Out For Smokey."

MICKEY:

Oh.

SUE GIKI:

And I read to them.

MICKEY:

To the truckers?

SUE GIKI:

Yeah.

MICKEY:

What do you read?

SUE GIKI:

Tropic of Cancer.

Just the dirty parts mostly. And then the parts that don't make sense.

The "poetry."

I read 'em real sexy.

(slowly moving into a state of religious trance; having an ecstatic vision)

I can see them out there:

truckers in their cabs

driving all up and down route 95

from Florida to Maine
the headlights passing across their faces
the white lines passing beneath their wheels
hundreds of truckers driving through the night
pulling their massive loads
their pants bulging with these massive boners
that I gave them.

It's a political act.

MICKEY:
(as if he understands)
Oh, yeah.

SUE GIKI:
Those boners are timebombs.

You watch.

In a few years -
maybe 5 maybe 10 -
but soon -
all these truckers in their trucks?
they're just gonna stop, en masse.
Block the highways, denying deliveries all over the country
Leave their trucks behind and walk to the nearest airport
They buy tickets and fly to Paris France
Abandoning the decaying economy of america
rotting in thousand mile traffic jams up and down the east coast
grass covers asphalt
the machinery rusts and dies
the land reverts to grace returns to an eden owned by animals
and all the deep mistakes we've made are smoothed away, forgotten
in a deep haze of green fields and scenes of nature untamed

and our sick empire will fall at last
like an avalanche
pulling a mountain
into the sea.

You see?
Those trucker's boners -

they have my name written on them.

MICKEY leans in slowly and kisses SUE passionately.
They hold the kiss a long time.
It is a very good kiss.
Then:

SUE GIKI:
(pulling back)
You kiss like a Republican.

MICKEY:
I do?

SUE GIKI:
Yes.

MICKEY:
Oh.
Hey do you wanna go to Boston next Sunday to -

SUE GIKI:
I gotta go.

MICKEY:
Wait.

SUE GIKI:
Sorry.

MICKEY:
Why?

SUE GIKI:
See you Monday.

SUE grabs her bag and exits.

Pause.

MICKEY looks out the window,
Checks the door.
Reaches under the bed.

He pulls out a worn brightly colored pillow
in the shape of Minnie Mouse.
The kind of pillow one makes in middle school home ec.

MICKEY masturbates over the Minnie Mouse pillow.

MICKEY:

(quietly)

Don't go. Please stay. Don't go.

DUCK's face appears in the window, watching.
The model of the space shuttle hanging from the ceiling explodes
as MICKEY comes.

history lesson part 2 - the minutemen (2 minutes 12 seconds)

MICKEY stands behind a beat-up snare and kick set up.

He wears a white t-shirt with the words

“THE ZOO SLUTS” written on the front in black magic marker.

DUCK has a worn Sears Silvertone guitar and beat-up Ampeg tube amp

he got at a yard sale for 50 bucks.

The boys shake with unreleased energy,
beaming and panting for their tiny rock n roll moment.

DUCK:

Ready?

MICKEY:

Yeah!

DUCK:

Ready?

MICKEY:

YEAH!

DUCK:

READY?

MICKEY:

FUCK YEAH!

DUCK:

(as to an imaginary audience, or to the real audience)

This song is called "The Disguise." Onetwothreefour!

DUCK strums the guitar. No sound.
The amp isn't turned on.
He turns it on. Sound from the guitar.
Smiles at MICKEY, they are unfazed.

DUCK:

(as to an imaginary audience, or to the real audience)

This song is called "The Disguise." Onetwothreefour!

So they're gonna play. They're gonna play and they sound like shit.
Their's is an awful din, an outtature racket, an atonal
skronktatstic symphony of pure unadulterated BAD.

Yes they are bad. They are bad. But this badness? It
is all theirs - it sounds like their insides feel. It's bad?

But they OWN it. It's their real-estate, soul-property,
something no one can fuck with, no one
can take away. It's sonic DNA. Yes it's bad - but it
fills them with energy and opens out onto freedom.
and in this moment when the bad starts to flow
the boys are flooded with light and
lifted, briefly, out of themselves
Yes they are bad. But they will get better.

Duck and Mickey sing their first song:

DUCK:

I don't need your

MICKEY:

fucking rules

DUCK:

I don't need your

MICKEY:

dead end schools

DUCK:

I don't need your

MICKEY:
bad advice

DUCK:
I don't need your

MICKEY:
market price

DUCK:
I'm only half a human being
the other half I've never seen
I am something in between

MICKEY & DUCK:
I'm everything you find obscene!

MICKEY:
I don't need your

DUCK:
Christian lies

MICKEY:
I don't need your

DUCK:
alibis

MICKEY:
I don't need your

DUCK:
jaundiced eyes

DUCK & MICKEY
I can see through your disguise!

Songs ends. MICKEY and DUCK are panting.
They look at each other
and smile.

soul kitchen - x (2 minutes 27 seconds)



DUCK and SUE GIKI on the bed making out.
Neither seem all that into it.
DUCK has new piercings in his ears
and he wears a homemade t-shirt that says "Die Don McClean Die!"
on it.
OK so - The song is "Soul Kitchen" by X.

X is actually kinda overrated but this song, a Doors cover, is pretty fucking right on. Making explicit the line of descent from L.A. LSD hippie to Hollywood amphetamine punk.

Awww. You hear that?
Where Exene's voice just - breaks, squeals off the note like black tires leaving a wet road?

That's what I live for.

The voice squeals - some defect in the human deliverer causing her to exceed the form -
or the guitar player not knowing when to stop, so taken up with the sound he's making -
it's those moments of embarrassing over-reach -
where untrained human expression exceeds the limits of the structure it's channeled through -
people doing what they shouldn't, doing things wrongs, doing what they were never taught to do.
Or just being dumb blind humans, as we all are, stumbling around lookin for a way to let what's
inside out.

It's maybe ridiculous. To respond so deeply, so viscerally, to music that's trash, self-appointed
trash, the music the detritus of a culture makes rubbing up against itself.

I'm sure if I were up here listening to Opera or Jazz or fucking Celine Dion - some virtuoso
performer with perfect technique and not a note out of place - that would seem more acceptable,
understandable, sympathetic.

Maybe you wanna know what makes this music so capital G Great what makes it so important.

I'll tell you.

This music is capital G great because the fucking Mistakes stay In.

And that's what I listen for. Failure and Excess. The Mistakes.

A place where technique never really existed in any meaningful way.

No technique but someone is home inside the song -
breath and pulse and rage inside there.

Warts and all human sound.

All called wrong in other music given space to roost in here.

That's brave and stupid and self-destructive and unbearably beautiful.

To leave the mistakes in. To invite them in.
To leave the mistakes in and call that perfect.

Cause fuck -
it's a lot fucking easier to leave them out.
Isn't it?

Ok.

SUE GIKI:

Is Mickey coming back?

DUCK:

I don't know. Why?

SUE GIKI:

Just. What if he saw us?

DUCK:

So?

pause

SUE GIKI:

Where'd he go?

DUCK:

He's at the swimming pool.

SUE GIKI:

How come?

DUCK:

He likes that shit. Swimming around with little kids.

SUE GIKI:
Is he like teaching them?

DUCK:
No. He's just swimming.

SUE GIKI:
Oh.
Swimming's cool.

DUCK:
I guess.

They start making out again.
DUCK puts his hand up SUE's skirt.

SUE GIKI:
Hold on.

DUCK:
(not stopping)
What.

SUE:
Hold up!

DUCK:
What!

SUE GIKI:
I'm not gonna do that with you.
Just so you know.
No touching me down there and No fucking.
Understand?

DUCK:
How come?

SUE GIKI:
I'm saving myself.

DUCK:
For what?

SUE GIKI:
I'm Saving Myself For The Revolution.

pause

DUCK:
...oh.
(beat)
Well -
how about a blow?

SUE considers

SUE GIKI:
Ok.

SUE goes down on DUCK.
DUCK falls back on the bed.

pause

MICKEY peers in the window.
Shocked at first, then just blank.
He watches and watches until DUCK comes.