

October 2017's Posts

A month of music....

10/31/17

My song for the day on Halloween is Thriller. Michael Jackson was one flawed human being in his personal life. However, when he released his 13+ minute video for Thriller, he fired a shot that was heard around the world when it came to music videos. It's pure genius. And captures the spirit of Halloween.

10/30/17

The penultimate song for October is "Crazy" by Gnarlz Barkley. We can all need a virtual break from reality when things get overwhelming. Apparently this song was written right after CeeLo Green lost both of his parents. CeeLo Green and Danger Mouse claim a more benign story behind the song, that successful artists need to be a little crazy to be taken seriously. For me, the meaning I take away is that a ignorance is bliss for the short-term, and that has value. Living in a state of denial over a longer period of time can be, and usually is problematic.

10/29/17

You may laugh when I bring up this next song. It's "MmmBop" by Hanson. Its hard to believe the song is 20 years old. However, unlike the previous song, they have awesome advice, which is to hold on to the ones who really care, because in the end they're be the ones who are there (for you). Which in turn reminds me of the Prince song made popular by Bonnie Raitt - "I Can't Make U Love Me". Rather than put energy into relationships that aren't working, focus on the ones that are, or on cultivating new ones.... And in the words of Hanson, "Keep planting to find out which one grows."

10/28/17

Sometimes it's easy to feel sorry for oneself, especially when a relationship ends. The Pet Shop Boys did a duet with Dusty Springfield called "What Have I Done to Deserve This?" It is human nature at times to feel wronged when we get dumped. And take a victim stance about what has happened. And initially this is a reasonable place to be. However, if this "poor me" attitude persists it doesn't accomplish much and in fact tends to leave us stuck in a rut. We all have to pick ourselves up at times from a lost love, job, friendship or situation. It's hard to do when you are alone and isolated. Connection to others is the way to go when we need help getting back up, because with assistance, getting back up is easier and faster than when we're left to do it on our own.

10/27/17

When I am feeling down, or frustrated, one of my favorite songs is Gloria Estefan's "Coming Out of the Dark." I have always liked the imagery created from the ideas of being in the dark vs. in the light. It's not just the religious aspects, but the secular meanings as well. Obviously being in the light of God helps one feel not alone. Beyond that, being in the light is where people are doing well and feeling good. Darkness symbolizes being sneaky and bad. I aim to live my life

in the light where there are no secrets and fewer worries.

10/26/17

My first job in social services was an internship at YouthCare (back when it was called Seattle Youth and Community Services) working at their shelter on Beacon Hill. The song "Children of the Night" by Richard Marx reminds me of many of those kids. What's impressive to me is how resilient many of these kids are in spite of their life experiences. I can only imagine what it would be like to be pushed out of the family home as a child for not turning out how my parents wanted me to be. The next time you see a street kid, remember it is quite possible that his/her family members have told him/her they wish s/he had never been born.

10/25/17

"Simple Man" is an amazing song by Lynyrd Skynyrd. Unlike Sweet Home Alabama or Free Bird, this a slower ballad that advises us to listen to our mothers and the words of advice they give to us growing up. Mothers tend to love us how we are, and in the song that is her advice to her son - to be himself and love who he is. And live a simple life, and not lust after what others have. In our world today which is very focused on immediate gratification, this is even harder for the boys and young men who are growing up. The line from the chorus that I believe sums it up is: "And be a simple kind of man. Oh, be something you love and understand."

10/24/17

You can find inspiration in many different places and from different artists. Today's is "Closer to the Heart" by Rush. The lyrics start by saying:

And the men who hold high places
Must be the ones to start
To mold a new reality
Closer to the Heart

Our country needs people who are in leadership positions to do this. It's isn't enough to seize or get control, but use your heart and soul (in a positive way) when you do. Some have and are doing better than others in taking the lead. The song ends with the following lyrics:

You can be the captain
I will draw the chart
Sailing into destiny
Closer to the Heart

It talks about letting people who have the skills take the wheel and steer. But we need competent as well as compassionate leaders to do this. Just because you can grab the helm and steer doesn't mean you are the best person to do it. But if you are, go for it.

10/23/17

Sly Stone is one of the greatest musicians and writers. There are so many classic songs of his to choose from. From "Stand" to "Everyday People", "Sing a Simple Song" and "Thank You...." Today's song is "If You Want Me to Stay." An important message in this song is that

you can't go into relationships trying to change your partner and expect a positive outcome. We all have our problems and issues. Can you tolerate your partner's?

10/22/17

Fast forward to The Clash and "Know Your Rights." Similar message, different decade and genre of music. The struggle continues. I'm not sure if there is a similar song in the teens of the 21st century. But there should be as the gap between the haves and have-nots widens.

10/21/17

Bob Marley has many songs that are inspirational. In the current climate I am feeling drawn back to "Get Up, Stand Up". We all need to be active and stand up for what we believe. As a man of faith, even Bob Marley challenges us to be skeptical of religious leaders because their motives aren't always pure. At the end of the song he chants, "Don't give up the fight!" Reminding us all to persist and persevere.

10/20/17

Growing up I really enjoyed listening to Dr. Demento. He played novelty songs during his shows. One of my favorites was the remake of the William Tell Overture by Spike Jones, with the lyrics added being the calling of a fictitious horse race. There were many bad puns in the calling of the race, which totally entertained me. When I realized that my favorite childhood TV host J.P. Patches used the opening of this remake to start his show every day that was even better.

10/19/17

"Needle and the Damage Done" is a song by Neil Young about him watching a friend and band mate die from heroin addiction. At the end of the song he sings "But every junkie's like a setting sun." You can see opiates drain the life out of people, at least the one's that live for awhile. Many of the homeless in my neighborhood are IV heroin users and you can see their decline over time. For those who live around IV drug addicts the tell tale sign of their addiction many times are the orange syringe caps you find everywhere, and sometimes the actual syringes. There are no simple solutions. Are safe injection sites a good idea? Perhaps. It might decrease the number of ODs, as well as decrease the chance of people contracting HIV or Hepatitis. If that doesn't compel you to think twice, at least kids would be less likely to stumble upon used and uncapped needles.

10/18/17

"Proud Mary" is a great song. It talks about slaving away at a job and getting up the courage to quit and do something different. It may not pay as well, but if you are part of a community it doesn't matter because people look out for each other. People talk about golden handcuffs all the time that keep them connected to something (mainly a job) that makes them money and miserable. But if you are part of a community and give to the community, the community will generally look out for you too. Maybe this is an old-fashioned concept and people may feel cynical about whether it remains true. While the methods of connecting and supporting one another have changed, there are still ways we all look out for one another. But the point is that this will only happen when we are connected to others.

10/17/17

One of my favorite love songs is "Intimate Friends" by Eddie Kendricks. I remember falling in love 19 years ago and this is a song that made me happy during that time (and to this day). If you haven't heard it before take a listen. You may not know the song, but the instrumental of it has been sampled a lot and you probably have heard other people using it.

10/16/17

A song I appreciate is "Killing Me Softly". Music has always moved me, and this song is all about that. Some musicians have a knack for writing and performing music that we can relate to. Furthermore, there is something about music's ability to penetrate even the most guarded person. Musicians sing about love, lost loves, pain, suffering and sometimes even joy. This song captures the magic that music can create in all of us.

10/15/17

Although I haven't seen Hamilton, I have heard the soundtrack and I like it. It's refreshing to have musicals use more contemporary music. It will help draw in new audiences to the medium and help keep that form of entertainment alive.

10/14/17

As a person born in Salt Lake City as a non-Mormon, I was interested when I heard several years ago that there was going to be a musical on Broadway about being a Mormon missionary. There are many funny and interesting parts to it. And I believe that the Mormons have been good sports in general regarding there being a musical making fun of their beliefs. In some respects, many aspects of their religion were explained to the general public who would never have been exposed to Mormonism otherwise. There are so many good songs from the show it's hard to pick one. If you haven't seen the show, it is worth going to a live performance.

10/13/17

Growing up my dad was always playing music in the house. This wasn't what everyone else's dad was listening to however. As a person who was born and lived in Europe for the early part of his life, he was raised on classical music. In addition to Mozart, the three B's as well as other classical composers, he listened to the soundtrack to Candide. I remember the song "The Best of All Possible Worlds." It took me a long time to understand that this song was sarcastically making fun of people who viewed this as the best of all possible worlds. I didn't and don't want to be a cynical person, but then I don't to be naive either. At the end of the song, it is punctuated by the statement Q.E.D., as if somehow he has proven that this is the best of all possible worlds. There is always a funny irony when people proclaim their answer to be THE answer, when they are so off base, or it is an issue or problem with no simple answer. Life is so complicated. Q.E.D.

10/12/17

Jimi Hendrix's "Bold as Love" is a great song representing different emotions with colors. Many colors have come to represent emotional states. And as whole human beings we all have a rainbow of colors within us. We don't always all recognize or know the name for things we are feeling. And sometimes we will try to suppress or avoid certain emotions, but they are there. Embrace your emotional rainbow and live a fuller life.

10/11/17

There are some songs that even though they are poppy and fluff have great messages. I got hooked on a One Direction song "The Story of My Life." Love is a risk. And each of the guys has his take on it in their verses. The constant and what is most of our foundations are our families. We bring our approach to love in our present lives from our experiences of love and affection growing up. We gravitate to what is familiar. This is how we can find wonderful and supportive people. But it also how multi-generational abuse can occur in spite of how bad it felt to witness or be on the receiving end of it. If you come from an abusive or neglectful family, work at not repeating the patterns that are the story of your life.

10/10/17

Carrie Underwood put out the song "Before He Cheats" which became wildly popular. It appeals to everyone, but women in particular, regarding getting even with someone who hurt you by hitting the person where it hurts. In this case she trashes her ex's prized possession, his truck. While our instinct is to lash out when hurt that is only a short-term way of trying to feel better. It really accomplishes very little and causes a lot of problems instead. It's hard to sit with pain, disappointment, hurt and most of all betrayal. The solution is to surround yourself with people who are loyal and will support you through the hard times. The empowerment Rod Argent was speaking of in "Hold Your Head Up" wasn't trashing your ex or his things. It was to take control of one's life. It's being assertive, not aggressive. "Before He Cheats" feels good for people to sing in the middle of feeling wronged. And singing about all the things you want to do can be cathartic. But doing them is criminal, and not the best way to handle losing the love of your life.

10/9/17

A song from an earlier time in my life was Argent's "Hold Your Head Up." It's a song to inspire people, and women in particular, to hold their heads up, be assertive, even when being doubted or questioned and to persevere. The organ solo by Rod Argent is amazing. It may not inspire everyone to move confidently forward, but it did for me. I always thought the song's lyrics were "Hold your head up, whoa" and all along the "whoa" according to Rod Argent is actually "woman."

10/8/17

Stevie Wonder has written many amazing songs. From the lighthearted to the serious. Today the song "Love's in Need of Love Today" is the one that resonated with me. There is a lot of hate going around, and it's easy to get caught up in it. And part of what this song is saying is that love needs to be fed and nurtured and encouraged. Love isn't just a feeling but an action. It's contradictory to talk about hating or judging in the name of God. God is about love, and more specifically about love in spite of the imperfections in people.

10/7/17

During my teen years (and beyond) I have loved listening to The Who. The movie and soundtrack to Quadrophenia is one of my favorites because of the strong feelings of isolation and alienation described by the songs. The need and desire to belong and going out of one's head trying to figure out where that was. The lyrics in "5:15" are cleverly written by Pete Townsend

using oxymorons in phrases in the song to describe these competing feelings. Examples such as "magically bored", "sadly ecstatic", and "gravely outrageous" are but three in the song.

10/6/17

Earlier this week I went to see Stanley Jordan perform at a local club. He is one of the most talented people I have ever seen. He talked about playing Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra in a stone cavern in Hungary that has been made into a music venue. How amazing and cool is that? When he played Bartok for us it was great, and I was imagining how it might've sounded in the Hungarian venue where he had just played it several days before. I enjoy being in "the zone" where the world disappears and you are just living in the moment focused on one thing. Stanley Jordan is one of those people who can take me to that place. Are there people or situations that allow you to truly live in the moment?

10/5/17

If you are old enough you probably remember when the video for Blind Melon's "No Rain" came out. The lonely sad little bee, watching rain gathering in puddles and reading books. Not understanding, but experiencing depression. The turning point comes when she discovers the new world through the gate which is full of socially awkward bees just like her. And she can dance and be part of something. Humans aren't meant to isolate, and we all need to find community with other people.

10/4/17

Probably one of the more ambiguous songs written in the last 40 years is Bohemian Rhapsody. Freddie Mercury refused to clarify anything about its meaning before dying. A common interpretation is that it is about his coming out process, while being in a long-term relationship with a woman. The death in the song is of his straight persona, and the fear of judgment for being gay leads to a lot of turmoil. This was 1975, and coming out with a religious family would have been difficult. It's amazing the shift in the culture that has occurred to allow for a much more accepting view of being bisexual or gay. Thinking about the song "Spiderweb", would Freddie Mercury have created what did if he was born and raised now when his sexual interests weren't nearly as taboo. We'll never know.

10/3/17

I am a fan of Joan Osborne. I am feeling inspired by the song "Spiderweb". It's a song about Ray Charles getting his eyesight back. He loses his ability to create music and instead he sits in front of the TV and his brain is full of spiderwebs. What I take from this song is that life is full of trade offs. He might've been a gifted musician because of or in spite of his blindness. However, when he gained sight, he lost his gift and was focused on a more passive activity (TV watching). Sometimes, other people and their lives seem more attractive than our own. However, there are many unique and positive things that make us who we are. People will sometimes say they would give up their left (insert a body part here) if they could only look a certain way, or have a specific talent. I say rejoice in your innate talents, embrace the way you look, and hold onto your body parts.

10/2/17

I still miss Prince. There is a lyric from his song "Cause and Effect" that I try to live by. The part of the song I am talking about is: "If you stamp your passport full of regret, you have

nothing to remember and a lot to forget." I have talked about the idea that I prefer experiences over things, especially when spending my money. You can't totally ignore the past, and it is foolish if you don't plan for the future, but try and live in the present, and fill your life with experiences that are meaningful to you. If you do that, when you reflect back on your life, you will have more positive memories and fewer regrets.

10/1/17

One of my favorite Bruce Springsteen lyrics is from the song "Tunnel of Love". Bruce sings, "Then the lights go out, it's just the three of us. You, me, and all that stuff we're so scared of." When you enter into a relationship it can be intense and hopefully intimate. When people let down their guard, and allow another person really get to know them and see inside the ride can get rough. But love is about taking risks, and having faith, and knowing the joy of connecting with another person. And... You will never get that joy without risking your heart.