Mr.Langlois

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Values Playlist

Playlist:

‘First Light/ Last Light’- *Converge*

‘One More Time’- *Roy Orbison*

‘Down in the Hole’- *Tom Waits*

‘I Was a Teenaged Werewolf’- *The Cramps*

‘Green Grass’- *Bill Withers*

‘Shiloa’- *Murder By Death*

Reflection on Songs

I remember taking out the red, transparent record and totally being enthralled and mesmerized. On the black cover of Converge’s *You Fail Me* was a hand in white and this was the first vinyl record I’d ever bought. The label at the center of this red disc was not the name of the band but white and red snakes moving away from the center of the disc and towards the red part of the LP. When I put the LP on the turntable and it started spinning the snakes seemed to come alive and writhe out to the exterior. This was a long time ago. The first songs on the A side are “First Light” then followed by “Last Light”. The first track is merely an intro, slow droning guitars playing a couple of notes that to me is like the hum the sun makes at sunrise, low, gritty and pushing through darkness. When the lyrics erupt they are as piecing as lead singer Jacob Bannon’s screams,

*I need you to be the strength of widows and sole survivors  
 I need you to be as fearless as new mothers and new fathers  
 I need you to be the hope of hearts who lost true love  
 I need you to be the might of their first kiss*

To me this is pure and unadulterated art. Not only does the music and lyrics have weight and potency but the texture of the vinyl itself and how it feeds and builds on the music is truly magnificent. To me it is sincere, brilliant, brutal and lyrically cut through me and it is for this reason it would be the first tracks of my cultural playlist. These six songs that range in style and genre represent values that I hold dear and many lessons I’ve learned throughout my 34 years on this increasingly cruel and ironic world. In many ways this playlist is similar to that first record, chasing the snakes out from the center and blasting an anthem that begs for truth and strength.

Monsters have always meant a great deal to me. Academy Award winner Guillermo Del Toro famously noted that monsters are tremendously important to our culture and represents our failure and our flaws. It is through monsters that we learn, become sympathetic and grow as individuals. It is for this reason and many more that I’d have on my playlist, “I was a Teenaged Werewolf” by *The Cramps.* The song is a bizarre mishmash of surf rock, psychedelic rock, punk and it is infused with a horror undertone. The mishmash of musical genres alone speaks to my plurality of my taste and the dominance of horror refers directly to my love for this cinematic genre. Ever since I was a kid I was obsessed with monsters, I hosted camp horror movie parties in my twenties at my apartment, I now have my master’s degree in horror cinema and work for one of the foremost horror movie festivals in the world. These elements of my own history demonstrate that hard work and passion are one of values that I hold dear.

The lyrics to the song similarly represent being different as a kid. The way that Lux Interior croons “I was a teenaged werewolf… no one understood me and no one even said thanks/ no one could make me stop” these lines seem less like an apology and more of a twisted celebration. I always remember standing out and being strange in school and struggling to find my way. I always felt monstrous, awkward, socially inept and still to this day do. The way that this song champions the monstrous and difference reminds me that I value that which makes me unique and the importance of being confident and honest with yourself.

Having for so long and strove for something it is something to finally receive and find yourself there, where you are meant to be. The songs ‘Down in the Whole’ by Tom Waits and ‘Green Grass’ by Bill Withers both articulate being happy with who and where you are. ‘Down in the Whole’ is a brilliant track about the struggle with temptation and not letting the ‘devil’ get the best of you. Though I’m not particularly religious, the devil as a metaphor for the darkness of the soul rings all too true. The fact that this song was similarly the anthem for my favourite TV, *The Wire*, similarly adds to the songs resonance. The show itself is an in depth, harshly realistic reflection on public service in inner city Baltimore and explores the failing of the education and the struggles of everyday life. This coupled with ‘Green Grass’ by Bill Withers explains that you need not look at others because happiness needs to be found in oneself. Withers’ stripped down style and soothing voice makes this message all the more revealing and relatable and represents inner strength, self-confidence and being proud of your accomplishments.

*You Fail Me* now hangs now on my wall a reminder of art’s power, its hope and strength. This playlist calls up a great many memories all of which have helped formulate who I am and my values. ‘One More Time’ by Roy Orbison is a simple, striped down acoustic song but the lyrics are sharp and piercing. The songs switches from “tell me one more time that you want me” to “tell me one more lie” while the key of the song swifts making the short little song into a compelling change of mood.