

Why Do I Sound Like This?

- This one feels scattered, but we pounce when inspiration strikes -

I'm sitting down to write for the first time in months. Two days ago I was forced to remove myself from my employment situation. Today I find myself about 15% banged up and feeling somewhat beyond repair, but also 85% excited, loose, motivated, and thrilled to see what's next. I had a gig the night I quit my job. And I'm not sure I'll be able to find the words to explain how much fun I had on that gig. It was my first time playing with Miles Cakebread-Kraus and his band. I've been wanting to play more music again for a while now. I think a combination of moving back from New York, the pandemic, and some take-home stress from my job had me defeated. I've been passively leading bands around the city for the last few years but never really took the full plunge. And I certainly did not even consider taking a gig with someone else's band. Are you nuts? Play someone else's music? What a terrible idea. I don't really know how I arrived to this perspective, but there we were. I sometimes get socially anxious and people make me nervous. I've never been a huge fan of using the english language to communicate verbally and I think this is why I'm so attached to playing music and writing. I can be fairly unshakeable when I have a bass in my hands. I don't remember the last time I was nervous for a gig. Maybe when I sang Neil Young at a high school talent show when I was 16 years old. But let me tell you, the nerves were taking over. I was literally shaking. I couldn't quite sort it out, but I thought I was dealing with some negative emotions from quitting my job that afternoon. As soon as we started playing I felt safe. Miles and his band weren't going to let me die and they also sounded exceptional. I'm not sure how I was sounding, and I made a pretty strong effort to not let my mind go there. I've always recorded everything. Part of making progress with music is listening back to yourself and fixing what you don't like. Hey, guess what. I don't like any of it. That's where we're at. So I didn't bring my recording majig and I didn't even click on my voice memos app. Maybe someone else recorded the gig but that's their problem. I was free and this was a deeply cathartic experience. Miles, Simon, Daniel, and Ali - if you're reading this, thank you for taking care of me and the music. It was a special night and I really, really needed it.

Happiness often shows up when I least expect it. I don't know what that means, or what I need to do in order to mitigate the illusion of my anticipated emotions. Work has been stressful and I really let it control too much of my life. I kind of couldn't, but I also didn't want to do anything - Cue the dreaded arts league hockey tournament battle of the bands. Why would anyone want to have fun playing music with their pals? Let alone some of the best pals the world has ever known. I went to school, I've inherited cultural traditions from my heroes, I'm focused and I practice like a lunatic. I've curated my artistic statements to a very specific corner of the music world and I refuse to compromise in that regard. Bull. Fucking. Shit. Music is fun, my friends are the best, and a weekend of being a silly goose doesn't take away from my artistic integrity.

It's NHL playoff time. The group chats are going off. The Jets are looking good. It's a wonderful time to be alive. Someone in one of my hockey group chats sent me a link to a young woman playing trombone. She doesn't know how to play the trombone, or music at all for that matter, and she posts herself playing versions of popular songs. Very funny. I'm also willing to concede that she might know exactly what she's doing on the horn and maybe she's a social media marketing genius. Who knows. Long story short, I opened the link of her playing on my laptop and found myself giggling at the auto-play algorithm that followed. As I was emptying the dryer I noticed I was no longer listening to something that I would consider to be humorous. I stood up and said out loud to myself in my empty condo, "when did my band play Crazy Train?" I stood still and thought for a second, realized it was definitely me playing bass, and walked over to my laptop to investigate. It was a concert band of elementary school students just plugging away at their version of Ozzy's Crazy Train. Bless their hearts. Were they ever going for it. So that's something that made me feel great. I spent more years in music school than doctors spend in doctor school and I just mistook myself and my band for children. Shout-out Mom and Dad for encouraging me to make good choices. At least I'm happy and healthy.

I know why I sound this way - Stiff, brutal, slippery intonation, and occasionally artistically lost. When people treat us a certain way our bodies definitely hold on to that energy and the feelings that accompany our experience. Certainly all instruments to a degree, and maybe I'm biased, but strings are a precise lie detector. Especially with the bow. If you're not okay, you don't sound ok. Every movement. Every breath. Whether you're on your the balls of your feet or on your heels. Everything affects everything. I'm getting back on the horse and I'm looking forward to playing more music more often and maybe taking it a little less seriously.

Once again I've had to relearn the age old lesson - friends, music, hockey, and my parents will save me every fucking time. I'm lucky to share this shit show world with so many incredible people and I'm grateful to feel so supported. On to the next one.

Jets in 5,
MD