

WEEKEND

AMBIENCE

COLUMN: ON THE ROAD

Those Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days

A summer flashback as summer “bears” down on us.

// BY ALEXANDER MEDEL

“It still feels like August,” a friend of mine said. He stared at the hammock across the TD courtyard. I nodded in agreement as my gaze fell on the cornhole boards. A sigh of resignation escaped through my lips and into the humid air. I made sure to exhale gracefully as a swarm of gnats hovered mischievously nearby. In the first few days of October, the weather seemed to grow sentimental about the end of summer. I did, too.

My friend kept on talking. About what, I couldn’t tell you. I was too busy reminiscing about a summer morning in Lake Tahoe.

Situated in the Sierra Nevada roughly 40 miles south of Reno, Nev., Lake Tahoe is a large, alpine lake bisected by the California-Nevada state line. Known for its crystal blue waters, snow-capped mountains and pine-covered forests, the lake is a classic destination for all seasons, but especially the summer.

The lake has all those qualities that make California summer an ebullient daydream. The beaches are warm. The water is cool. The company is fine. The wind twirls with a joy it knows only in July, and sunbeams cover the earth in a glow that truly makes the state golden.

Mark Twain once called Lake Tahoe “the fairest picture the world affords.” If you have seen the lake as I have, you would know that he is not wrong. Every day I spent on the lakeshore, but especially the last, was a lesson in its beauty.

My parents and I spent three days on the lake, our last morning spent hiking at Emerald Bay. The bay, known for the shade of its waters, is bounded by tall mountains and lush forests complete with pines and furs. A small island sits squarely

at its center. It was a Bob Ross painting come to life.

The sun had just clipped over the mountains on the Nevada side of the lake when we started our hike down to the lakeshore. The morning was slow, and the bay was in no hurry to rush it. The water was still. The tide was gentle. There were neither wakes nor any noticeable tides. It was as if the bay and the sky were one and the same. I hesitated to stare too much, partly because I did not want to trip on the trail, but also because I felt as though my gaze might disturb the tranquility of the waters.

After a few minutes, my parents and I had made it to lake level. Continuing on the trail toward the shore, I stopped. There was something behind the trees.

A large, amorphous mass bounced in the brush near a trail running parallel to my own. The thing was dark and brown, but I couldn’t make out much more than that. I walked onward to a clearing to get a better look at whatever it was. The bobbing ball of fur was, in fact, a black bear.

I stood roughly 20 feet away from the bear. If the walk it was taking was not leisurely, it was certainly lethargic. It made no sign of emotion or excitement. It bore the same countenance of someone on their morning commute to work, or of a STEM major en route to Science Hill for a 9 a.m. lecture.

I kept myself a healthy distance away, hoping not to become a summer headline in the News. Quietly and discreetly, I signaled the sighting to my parents and fellow hikers. They all stopped, hushing their gasps into barely audible exhalations. Just then, the bear sprang out of its lethargy and darted into the lakeside brush.

The apparition left my dad amazed, my mom terrified and me elated. We finished our hike and claimed a picnic table on the shore of the bay. As my parents wandered nearby to take some photographs, I remained seated at the table to look out into the water. As my head panned across the horizon, I spotted several hikers to my left pointing in my direction with excitement. With the full knowledge that I am no public figure — at least not yet — I looked behind me to see, in the water, my ursine friend make a reappearance.

The bear seemed to be out on a morning swim, which, from its disposition, seemed to be a well-enjoyed morning ritual. It performed some rolls and splashes before it reached a point of land across the beach.

My friend jostled my arm, shaking me out of my reverie and back to the waking hours of a warm October in New Haven. I apologized for not paying attention as he left to go to class. I remained in the courtyard, where I watched a leaf bounce along the pavement, making its way to my feet. I looked at it and thought of the bear once more.

After making it to shore, the bear shook itself dry and wandered along the treeline. It went into the forest and — just like my summer and all those lazy, crazy, hazy days — was gone.

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PERSONAL ESSAY

My ever changing moods

Getting lost in the music of the Style Council

// BY CIELO GAZARD

Music overwhelms me. Every time I think I’ve listened to everything, I realize I haven’t even begun to scratch the surface of certain artists’ discographies, genres or eras in music. I fear over-listening to songs I love. What if “I’m Not in Love” by 10cc doesn’t move me like it has before? What if “Amelia” by Joni Mitchell doesn’t tug at my heartstrings anymore? I’ve already wasted countless hours mourning the day when my favorite artists will no longer be my favorites. At the same time, when I discover something new, I am reminded of why I have dedicated my life to music.

I was never supposed to become a Paul Weller fan. If we are to believe in musical geographical determinism, I, a 20-year old Nuyorican, shouldn’t even know the names of the bands he once fronted. But, since I’m always on the hunt for mid-20th century British rock, I have naturally become an avid listener to both the Jam and the Style Council. The latter, a politically-charged sophisti-pop outfit started by Weller after the Jam’s untimely breakup in 1982, I only started listening to last semester. Unless you happen to be a Paul Weller fan yourself, you’ve probably never heard of the Style Council. If you have, then chances are you’re British.

At a gift shop in Liverpool, I stumbled upon a collection of officially merchandised buttons of the Jam. The cashier was shocked that I was a fan of the group. When I mentioned I loved the Style Council, he lit up and talked about his favorite songs. He then asked, “Did they have any airplay in America?” My mother, an avid fan of ’80s pop rock outfits like Wham! and Duran Duran, had never heard of them. I responded that they did have one song hit the Top 40: “My Ever Changing Moods.” Reminiscing on my summer trip to the United Kingdom, I discovered that my most listened-to song was this little gem.

“My Ever Changing Moods” is not a happy song. There are two different versions of the song. The album cut, a pensive piano piece, was the first version I listened to. However, the single version, the Top 40 hit in America, has an incredibly upbeat and danceable instrumental. Even with the more

optimistic track, there’s no escaping the unease of the lyrics.

Part of the reason I love Paul Weller as a musician is because he is a diehard music fan. He’s a connoisseur of the classics, and the instrumentation of “My Ever Changing Moods,” with its horns and smooth guitar licks, reminds me of something Curtis Mayfield might have cut back in the early 1970s. However, the sunny instrumental is juxtaposed with a stormy uncertainty in the lyrics. Weller’s soulful voice sings, “The cool before the warm / the calm after the storm / I wish to stay forever — letting this be my food / But I’m caught up in the whirlwind and my ever changing moods.” The speaker is weary, unsettled, unpredictable. But life goes on, and no-one bats an eye at his struggles.

While the lyrics are deeply personal, the song is also a deeply political work. A reviewer once described the Style Council as a bunch of “vegetarian teetotaling socialists.” Their music was in direct contrast to Thatcher’s Britain, and Weller and company were not afraid to call out the ills of conservative society. The band has a song — an instrumental, no less — entitled “Dropping Bombs on the Whitehouse,” which refers to both the president’s residence and hard-line social conservative activist Mary Whitehouse, who is also one of the pigs in Pink Floyd “Pigs (Three Different Ones).”

The music video of “My Ever Changing Moods” heightens the musical/lyrical juxtaposition. Weller and fellow bandmate Mick Talbot are riding bikes through a park in Suffolk. After an instrumental break when Weller and Talbot are startled by waif-like beauties dancing in a field, the bike ride becomes more strenuous. Black-and-white images of atrocities and war flash on the screen as lyrics like “Teardrops turn to children who’ve never had the time / To commit the sins they pay for through another’s evil mind” are sung with a greater sense of urgency. The road signs have dollar signs and a mushroom cloud as they inch closer to the finish line and Weller sings “I wish we’d wake up

one day, and everyone feel moved” and laments “The love after the hate, the love we leave too late” in the song’s extended outro.

The final verse of “My Ever Changing Moods” is cut from the single, but it is easily my favorite verse in the whole song. After lamenting about the future that we “always leave too late,” Weller rises to sing, “I wish we’d come to our senses and see there is no truth / In those who promote the confusion / For this ever changing mood.” A song that is over 40 years old reflecting on a time of great political uncertainty only rings truer in today’s world. Weller is not preaching to the choir or speaking in a passive voice saying there is nothing left for the ordinary people to do. “My Ever Changing Moods” is a call to action. In the world of 2025, where popstars seem to dance over the issues

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pretend that they are not real, it is up to us to find our own voice and our own path.

“My Ever Changing Moods” was my song of the summer and perhaps my song of the year. However, the song does not comfort me or make me numb to my own struggles, my own ever changing moods. It embodies the personal being political and the political being personal. I hesitate to say I find this song relatable. How could I possibly relate to a then 25-year-old Paul Weller who was already uber-successful by 1984? As long as there are anxieties about the world we’ve failed and the possibility to create a new one, “My Ever Changing Moods” will forever be a part of my personal soundtrack to this uncomfortable reality.

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ILLUSTRATION BY NELLIE KENNEY