

Chromatic Fantasia

by Chris Okum



'Pink Turns To Blue' by Hüsker Dü

This song reminds me of the time I came home with a stray puppy. The puppy was small, white, and I named him Max. My dad took one look at the dog and said, "No." When I begged him to please keep the puppy my dad picked up the puppy by the scruff of the neck, took him outside, and threw him over our fence. We lived on the side of a mountain in a house on stilts.

'Hello It's Me' by Todd Rundgren

This song reminds me of being at the ABC Entertainment Center in Century City and watching a man walk out of the matinee showing of *A Chorus Line* at the Schubert Theater and immediately dropping dead of a heart attack, after which I asked my mom if we could get a steak sandwich at Harry's Bar. My mom said no. She said if I kept eating so much steak that eventually it would be me walking out of the theater and dropping dead of a heart attack. She pointed at the man and said, "That's you in fifty years." On the way down to the parking lot we passed by the Playboy Club, where men were walking in and out of with smiles on their faces. I asked my mom if they had steak sandwiches at the Playboy Club and she said, "Yeah, probably." Then I asked her if she thought the steak sandwiches at the Playboy Club were better than the steak sandwiches at Harry's Bar and she said, "You'll find out." My mom pointed at a lone man walking out of the club. He had a sour look on his face. He was bald, but what little hair he did have was disheveled. His face was red, he was coughing, and had a hand over his stomach. My mom said, "Look, that's you. There you go again."

'Big Empty Field' by Swell Maps

This song reminds me of my mom getting married for the third time. She got married on a rented yacht in Marina del Rey. She wore a burgundy dress. The groom's name was Don and he was a Vietnam vet with a missing foot. In the winter, if the temperature dropped

below 60 degrees, Don would tell me that he was wearing his "cock sweater." When I asked him what a cock sweater was he said, "It's a sweater. For your cock."

'God Tells Me To' by Ass Ponys

This song reminds me of when I lived in New York and the guy living next door to me was a German male pornstar who had moved to the United States to make it big in the adult film industry, which, at the time, still had roots in the Big Apple. Every night he would bring home a different woman and I could always hear him making love through the wall of my bedroom. Every woman would say the same thing at some point during their time with the German. They would say, "Stop, I can't come any more." The German wouldn't stop, though. He would keep on going. I thought he was going to be a huge star, the German. But he wasn't.

'Peace of Mind' by Blue Cheer

This song reminds me of my best friend's girlfriend. She was raised by her grandfather because both of her parents committed suicide. The girlfriend was supposed to die too, but her father, after killing her mother, shot her but didn't kill her. When her grandfather died she was so upset she shaved her head. She was the first girl I had ever seen with a shaved head and I told her she looked beautiful. She asked my best friend if he wanted to go see Abel Ferrara's *Ms .45* with her, but my best friend said no, so she said she would see it by herself. I wish she had asked me to see it with her because I would have said yes.

'Schizophrenia' by Sonic Youth

This song reminds me of getting a nose job. I didn't want to get a nose job, but everyone was telling me that I looked Greek. I wanted to look Italian, not Greek, so I saved up enough money to get a

cheap nose job from a guy whose office was in a strip mall next to a Blockbuster Video. I told the guy I wanted an Italian nose and he said no problem. When they took off the bandages I looked at my nose and it didn't look Italian. It looked Romanian.

'Indigo Eyes' by Peter Murphy

This song reminds me of the French foreign exchange student who attended our high school during junior year and who was expelled before the end of the first semester. Her name was Alice and on a school trip to the Marin Headlands in Northern California she dry-shaved her legs in front of everyone and then dropped acid on the first night. She woke everyone up with her screaming. The teachers found her outside of her tent, thrashing around on the ground and cursing in her native tongue, and they had no idea what to do. The captain of the Basketball team calmly walked out his tent, got behind Alice, put his arms around her, and told her how much he loved her, over and over and over again, for hours, until she finally came down. When she closed her eyes and fell asleep the sun was about to come up and the teachers applauded the captain of the basketball team, who stood up and bowed. Alice was kicked out of school as soon as we got home. She stayed in the United States, transferred to another high school, and after graduation she dated Paul Westerberg of The Replacements. All the guys I went to high school with unanimously agreed that watching Alice dry shave her legs was the hottest thing any of us had ever seen in person up to that point in our lives.

'Moonlight Feels Right' by Starbuck

This song reminds me of crawling underneath my mom and dad's bed and finding a jar of Jif peanut butter with a used tampon stuck in it. Turns out the Jamaican woman my mom and dad hired to clean the house and watch me during the day was the one who put the jar there. When my mom and dad asked why the Jamaican woman said

it was because she was trying to protect me. When my mom and dad asked what she was trying to protect me from the Jamaican woman said, "The two of you."

'I Was A Mod Before You Was A Mod' by Television Personalities

This song reminds me of watching my dad getting beaten up by two young guys he had hired to build a wet bar in our den. My dad refused to pay the two guys because he said the wet bar was too short. So the guys came over to our house one night, knocked on the door, and when my dad opened the door, the two guys started beating up my dad, who immediately started screaming for help. Since I was the only other person in the house I thought I should help him, but I was just a little kid, so I didn't. I just stood there. I watched my dad get beat up by two young guys and then I watched my dad writhe around on the ground asking me why I didn't help him. I told my dad I was sorry but he said, "I don't accept. I don't accept. I do not accept."

'Play The Game' by Queen

This song reminds me of my mom's friend, a woman who lived and worked on Zendik Farm, which some people said was a cult. My mom's friend wore a white turban on her head and said she used to be an actress. She told me she had a big part in *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*. She asked me if I had ever heard of the movie and I said yes. She told me they were going to make a sequel and that if I wanted to be in it I could. My mom's friend asked me if I wanted to be in the sequel to *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* and I said yes and she said she would call my mom when they were ready to make the movie and that I could be in it. But she never called. Later on, I asked my mom what had ever happened to her friend who said I could be in the sequel to *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* and my mom said she had no idea who I was talking about.

'M.E.' by Gary Numan

This song reminds me of J.R. Richard, the All-Star pitcher for the Houston Astros, who, at age 30, had a stroke while warming up before a game. They found a blood clot in his neck and he never pitched in the major leagues again, even though he tried. "I can't," said J.R. Richard when asked why he wasn't returning to the Astrodome mound. "I used to be fast. And now I'm slow."

'Fat Old Sun' by Pink Floyd

This song reminds me of the massacre at the McDonald's in San Ysidro, California, where a man named James Huberty killed 33 people. It was the first time I had ever heard of someone walking into a public place with a machine gun and opening fire. I was at my aunt's house, watching television, when a Special Report came on about what had happened at the McDonald's. My aunt came into the room, said, "Don't watch this," changed the channel, and then walked out of the room. The channel she changed it to was showing *The World According to Garp*. It was the part where Garp gets shot by his lifelong nemesis, Pooh.

'Station to Station' by David Bowie

This song reminds me of the gang of skateboarders at my school who wore black leather suspenders and white Capezio shoes. The leader of the gang was the child of one of the bigwigs in the Church of Scientology and whenever one of our teachers told him to be quiet in class he would tell the teacher, "I can have you disappeared if I want. All I have to do is make a phone call."

'While You See A Chance' by Steve Winwood

This song reminds me of my mom's second husband taking me out to lunch at a pizza place in Beverly Hills that said it had the most authentic New York style pizza outside of New York. My mom's second husband ordered a pizza with anchovies on it even though I said I didn't like anchovies and then he made me eat the pizza even though I said I didn't want to. "You best eat that," he said to me, and the way he said it I knew it would be best for me to eat it. He had grease all over his mustache, yet he kept wiping his chin, which didn't have any grease on it. He told me the reason he took me out for pizza was because he wanted to spend some time alone with me, away from my mom. He told me he had been coughing up green chunks recently. He told me it was my mom's fault he was coughing up green chunks. He asked me what I was going to do about it and I said I didn't know. He asked me how I was going to help him stop coughing up green chunks and I said I didn't know. He asked me what I was going to do about my mom and I said I didn't know.

'Rough Boys' by Pete Townshend

This song reminds me of my dad driving on the Pacific Coast Highway, at night, without his lights on, as fast as he could. I looked out the window and could see that there was nothing between our car and a thousand-foot drop into the ocean. When I asked my dad to slow down because it was too dark and he was going too fast he pointed at the sky and said, "Don't worry, the moon is enough."

'Winning' by Santana

This song reminds me of the Reggie Bar, which was peanuts and caramel in a mound shape, in milk chocolate, made for the New York Yankees outfielder Reggie Jackson in the late 1970's. I used to eat these while on the toilet, reading from baseball reference books chock full of statistics. I would smear the chocolate from my fingers all over the pages and when my mom would find these books she would ask me why I was using them to wipe my tush. I never told

her that what looked like poop was actually chocolate. I had no problem with her thinking I used the books as toilet paper.

'Praying for Time' by George Michael

This song reminds me of my freshman year of college, when I was stuck living in a dorm room with a guy who told me he was the tallest man in Taiwan. His name was Lloyd Chin and he was 6'11. Every Saturday morning he would get up at 5:30 and blast Tears for Fears' 'Sowing the Seeds of Love" over and over while talking long-distance to his mother back in Taipei, and the one time I asked him to please stop, to maybe turn down the music and not talk so loud, he threw a hissy fit, screaming at the top of his lungs, calling me names in Mandarin, knocking everything off his desk, and ripping the sheets and blankets off the bottom bunk mattress, where he slept, so I never asked again. At the end of our first month living together he handed me the phone bill and asked if I would pay for half of it, despite the fact that I hadn't made one single phone call. When I said I didn't think it was fair that I should pay for half of his long-distance phone calls to Taipei, Lloyd went crazy again, this time knocking everything off my desk, calling me names in Mandarin, and ripping the sheets and blankets of the top bunk mattress, where I slept, so I wrote him a check for exactly half of the phone bill.

'Rise' by Herb Alpert

This song reminds me of the Amityville Horror, not the movie, but the actual events that took place on the night of November 13, 1974, when Ronald DeFeo, Jr. used a high-powered rifle to murder his entire family as they slept. At his trial, DeFeo claimed that "voices" in the house commanded him to kill. This was his story.

