

Get More Protein From Your Music

by Con Chapman

The week before Memorial Day; summer's almost here and you can see people opening up to the season, like flowers. And then there's my partner, the Old Curmudgeon, who makes do with his usual all-weather grumpy demeanor.

"Hey there, Bink," I call to him as he approaches the elevator bank. He has a look of exasperation on his face. "Looking forward to summer?"

Bink

"No," Bink snaps. "The damn kids just got home from college. Sarah's become a vegan and Todd listens to that damn 'rap' music all the time."

"Kids," I say, commiserating with him. "You can't live with 'em, but you can live without 'em."

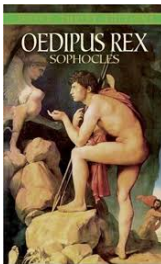


Sarah, the vegan convert.

"You know, some of those rap songs are disgusting," Bink grumbles. "I think I heard one of those guys say mother-you-know-what."

"Sort of like classical Greek tragedy."

"What?"



"Oedipus Rex—by Sophocles."

"Hmph. I took mostly business courses. Anyway, I'm worried about 'em both. Sarah's thin as a rail, and Todd says he wants to be a 'DJ'—whatever that is."

The elevator door opened, and we got on along with a crowd of others. As so often happens, the close confinement of the car acted as a stimulus to my brain, like the isolation booths on '50's game shows.

"You know, I think you could kill two birds with one stone if you just got more protein out of your music," I say to Bink. He looks at me as if I'm daft—and I'm not going to argue with him.

"What do you mean?" he asks with a quizzical look on his face, his head cocked to one side like a parakeet.



"Well, maybe if you played songs with a little meat in them, Todd would abandon the monotony of rap and Sarah would come back to the carnivore fold."

"I don't know any songs about meat," Bink says.

"Well, there's 'Hey Pete, Let's Eat More Meat' by Dizzy Gillespie," I say. "Probably converted more vegans than any other song in the history of Western Civilization, but I don't know if it's raunchy enough for Todd."



Diz Lives!

"Yes, the boy's obsessed with," here Bink stops to look around at the other passengers, then continues in a softer voice, "booty."

"Well, there's 'It Ain't the Meat It's the Motion' by The Swallows," I suggest helpfully.



The Swallows

"Maria Muldaur recorded it too," a frizzy-haired fifty-something woman behind us says.

"Righto," I say, "but The Swallows were first."

"Sounds rather—*risque*," Bink says. He once found a set of French postcards in his father's underwear drawer, and ever since has assumed that all Frenchmen are hopeless *debauchees*.

"Well, it's the sort of song that can bring a family together," I say. "Mom, dad, sis, junior—everyone gets a kick out of it."

"But those songs are expressions of *men's* fantasies," the frizzy-haired woman says. "How about 'I Want a Hot Dog for My Roll'?"

"By Butterbeans & Susie?" a bike messenger with stringy hair asks. I'm gratified to see that I've enhanced Boston's often cramped sense of civic engagement by inspiring such a lively discussion among total strangers, except for me and Bink, who are each strange in our own way.

Butterbeans & Susie

"Yes," the woman replies.

"I don't know," Bink says. "All these songs sound vaguely—disreputable."

I catch his drift. Jazz, R&B, black novelty acts—it's all music from the "wrong side of the tracks."

"You're right, Bink," I say. "What you need is music that's so well-established and esteemed it's approved by the federal government of the U-S of A."



Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton

"Yes," Bink says, his gaze fixed on a point in the middle distance. "I want something that's as safe as a U.S. Treasury bill—like John Philip Sousa."

"So I suggest the unexpurgated version of 'Winin' Boy' by Jelly Roll Morton," I say. "It's on a Library of Congress recording!"

"How's that go?" Bink asks.

"Like this," I reply. A young man in the back takes the iPod buds out of his ears as I begin to sing.

A nickel's worth of beefsteak, a dime's worth of lard.

A nickel's worth of beefsteak, a dime's worth of lard.

I'm gonna salivate your pussy 'til my peter gets hard.

The car is quiet. We have those little silent TV screens in our elevators, so I figure everyone's looking at the Red Sox score.



Library of Congress

"That's really in the Library of Congress?" Bink asks, incredulous.

"Yep—your tax dollars at work. When you think of all the crap that our taxes pay for, it's good to know that every now and then we get *some* value for our money."

The car glides to a stop at Bink's floor, and he steps off into the lobby.

"Well, uh, thanks for the suggestions," he says. "You know, whenever we have these little talks I always end up feeling . . . "

"Better?" I say as he hesitates.

"No—depressed."

