



It's All Right

WHEN I WAS 21, I wrote the perfect love song. It was conceived on a moonlit, enchanted evening in Hollywood, and the proverbial stars were aligned for writing a hit. My roommates were out; a breeze blew in through my screen door and the lights of downtown L.A. twinkled in the distance. My girl was 1,800 miles away at her St. Louis home, and I had that longing feeling in my belly. Taken together, this was an absolutely perfect songwriting atmosphere.

The song, which I titled "Moonbeam," poured out of me. I strummed and picked and played until my fingers started bleeding. And then I played through the sweat and the blood because I was the living embodiment of that old saw: You've gotta bleed a little while you sing, lest the words don't mean a thing. I played so long and sang so loud until right around midnight, the songwriter's witching hour, when my hand came down on a final strum of the E chord. Three stories below my balcony, claps and shouts rang out. My jam session had attracted quite the audience in the parking lot of my apartment complex. I stepped outside to thank them — it was quite the honor, especially in Hollywood, where wannabe songwriters are as plentiful as wannabe actors.

"Yo, dude, that's the one," someone called up in between bouts of applause. "I'm gonna be hearing that one on KROQ one of these days."

"Nah, man," I replied with a cat-got-the-canary grin. "Do you really think so?"

"Totally, dude. Wait till that girl you're singing about hears the song. She's gonna freak!"

A few weeks later, when my girl came out to L.A. for a visit, I played her song on my balcony. The guy was right: She freaked.

Even now, 14 years later, when I think about "Moonbeam," I can't help but to bob my head in common time and smile and hum. And even now, after my girl became my wife, I can't help but to reflect on that time and on that song and think about the No. 1 hit that never was. I've been wondering both aloud and to myself for well over a decade as to why "Moonbeam" never made the airwaves. After 14 years, I've realized that if Rodney Bingenheimer hasn't played my song on KROQ 106.7 FM yet, then it's not going to happen. And 14 years later, I finally know why.

Virtually every great songwriter has a hit with the lyrics "it's alright" or "it's all right" in it. Such a simple construction, and an even simpler meaning,

but all the big names have it. Moreover, the songs sound great, even if they don't read as such.

Bob Dylan gave his girl his heart, but she wanted his soul. But don't think twice: It's all right. Curtis Mayfield said that you've got soul, and everybody knows that it's all right. Of course, Jay-Z knows that it's alright, you heard? Although Big Head Todd understands that it's alright if you don't wanna go home, the Traveling Wilburys say, well, it's all right even if they say you're wrong.

Other aspiring songwriters should pay attention to our story on the 30A Songwriters Festival, which is happening along Florida's Emerald Coast from Jan. 13 to 15 (page 30). Big names will be as prevalent as Gulf of Mexico grains of sand, and the setting is so up close and personal that you just might be lucky enough to grab a beer with Matthew Sweet, who'll tell you why it's all wrong but it's all right, or Amy Ray of the Indigo Girls, whom you can ask why it seems easier to push than to let go and trust, but it's alright.

It's a great way to kick off the New Year, as is the interesting profile of snowboarding king Shaun White (page 40). In fact, this whole issue is one I'm particularly proud of because each story makes you realize as we fly into 2012 that, as 30A attendee Shawn Mullins says, everything's gonna be all right.

Meanwhile, now that I'm 35 and have cracked the songwriting code, I've revised the lyrics to "Moonbeam." Check out this refrain: "I've watched you from afar, and I've watched you from here/I've watched the days turn to months, and then into years/You are my daydream, you are my moonbeam, and you know when you're with me, this life, it's all right." Maybe my KROQ dreams aren't dead just yet. Rodney Bingenheimer: You know where to find me.


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