

Reggae Revolution

By Crispin Sartwell

Capital Times Advisor

When the dictatorial government of Ivory Coast was overthrown recently, the folks who took over gave credit to reggae.

Reggae made by Jamaican and African artists, smuggled into the country on cassette or made in Ivory Coast and distributed secretly, helped give the rebels an identity, helped form them into an effective fighting force, helped inform them of their own history.

Such artists as Alpha Blondy were close to the coup leaders. In a situation where the government controlled the media, they were overthrown by music.

The coup leader, Robert Guei, was so taken with Serge Kassy's music that he called him up. Kassy in turn wrote a song about Guei that made him a kind of folk hero, rallying the people to his cause.

Ivory Coast reggae, like the music of Bob Marley that inspires it, is a song of freedom. I'm betting the new government turns out to be democratic.

The effect of music on human beings is at once obvious and deeply mysterious. Music has altered human history and is a key aspect of cultural and personal identity. Music is a central part of many people's lives.

The other day I had the realization that although I'm a TV

junkie and a computer addict, I would give up either or both before I gave up my stereo. It's always on.

One of the deepest divisions in my marriage is that I like bluegrass; she doesn't. This says something profound about our personalities. I'm into tradition; she's into Prince.

When I tell you that the Beatles, Bob Dylan, and Bruce Springsteen are wildly overrated and should be replaced in the pantheon by the Stones, John Prine, and Elvis Costello, I am expressing one of my dearest beliefs, something that is central to my personality.

Plus as you may have just noticed, saying that to a Beatles or Springsteen fan is often regarded as a personal assault. In fact after I argued on this page that I could prove that the Stones were better than the Beatles, I got death threats from people who regard themselves as Branch Davidians and John Lennon as their personal David Koresh.

Watch a serious opera buff at the Met: eyes closed, with a sort of post-orgasmic expression on her face. Look at the shirts people wear, or their hairstyles: often these are tributes to their favorite band.

Get a bunch of teenage guys together and see what they talk about: girls, sports, but above all

DMX and Jay-Z.

The ancient Chinese philosopher Hsun Tzu argued that music was the organizing principle of culture: that when the music was right, the people lived harmoniously, and that bad music caused war, poverty, and divorce.

And indeed, music is one of the principal organizers of culture: think about the role of rap in uniting young black folks, and as in Public Enemy's "Fear of a Black Planet," telling them truths they wouldn't read in the papers: truths about police brutality, ownership of media outlets, and so on.

The contribution of Dylan and the Grateful Dead to the peace and civil rights movements, as well as to the culture of drugs, was inestimable. And, thanks to Hank Jr., a country boy can survive.

Music is also central to forms of division and prejudice. The skinheads in Germany are organized around Oi! music, and folks usually go marching off to war to the strains of a national anthem.

Music helps people kill (though sometimes killing is your best option) but it also helps people heal.

When I was 19 and broke up with my first girlfriend, I spent a year in my basement apartment listening to Billie Holiday.

So reggae is a good occasion for a revolution, and John McCain really should get into Nine Inch Nails.

No matter how much giant corporations control the flow of music, music, like you, wants to be free, and music is something you can make yourself and out of which you can make yourself and into which you can make yourself.

As Kid Rock puts it, giving a shout out to his heroes at the methadone clinic: Get in the pit and try to love someone.

(Crispin Sartwell, associate professor of humanities and philosophy at PSH, writes a column on country music for the NYPress.)

Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work. - Thomas Edison

Fortune Cookies

*Passionate kiss like spider's web, soon lead to undoing of fly.
 Virginity like bubble, one prick, all gone.
 Man who run in front of car get tired.
 Man who run behind car get exhausted.
 Man with hand in pocket feel cocky all day.
 Foolish man give wife grand piano, wise man give wife upright organ.
 Man who walk thru airport turnstile sideways going to Bangkok.
 Man with one chopstick go hungry.
 Man who eat many prunes get good run for money.
 Baseball is wrong, how can man with four balls walk.
 Panties not best thing on earth, but next to best thing on earth.
 War doesn't determine who is right, war determines who is left.
 Wife who put husband in doghouse soon find him in cathouse.
 Man who fight with wife all day get no piece at night.
 It take many nails to build crib but one screw to fill it.
 Man who drive like hell bound to get there.
 Man who stand on toilet is high on pot.
 Man who lives in glass house should change in basement.
 Man who fishes in other man's well often catches crabs.*

Lesser Known Fact #32

By Bryan Kapschull

Capital Times Staff Writer

Jerry Rice - actual birthname: Cletus Ricenthal.

Cletus's father was a drunken mischievous pig farmer by the name of Hank. Hank Ricenthal.

Hank had big dreams for his little boy. Every day before sunrise Hank would spray his assembly of swine with a healthy coat of silicone lube before their morning run.

You see, Hank produced the leanest pigs this side of Missoula thanks to this ritual a.m. hog marathon.

This resulted in some tasty low-fat bacon, real popular among those health-concerned folks.

After releasing these slippery porkers father Hank would exclaim "Cletus, come quick, the darn hogs got loose again!"

So, of course, Cletus would come runnin' and inquire, "Pa, I have a query, why do you let the bloody pigs out every morning only to make me run and gather them back up?"

Father Hank would bluntly reply in his best Pat Morita voice "Someday you'll understand Cletus-son, now go fetch those swine, but first go fetch me a Pabst Blue Ribbon."

After cracking open his father's favorite fermented breakfast, Cletus handed it to his Pa and readied himself for the chase.

These were some very evasive pigs, plus they were lubed beyond all lube. Cletus often thought to himself, "Silicone lube makes baby-oil seem like super glue."

Cletus looked out across the muddy brown pasture with a mindless gaze. Last night's downpour was sure to make his footing all the more difficult.

Cletus laced up his pig catchin' shoes. They were worn out with holes in the toes and when Cletus smelled 'em he was forced to turn away and stick out his tongue in a repulsed manner.

The smell reminded Cletus of the time he locked his dog in the basement and forgot about it till the following year.

The dog was no longer alive, although it appeared it had tried to survive by eating the branches of an artificial Christmas tree that had been stored under the stairway.

Back to the shoes. These were no ordinary pig-catchin' shoes. Cletus had poked roofing nails through the soles so there were spikes coming out of the bottom.

This resulted in unsurpassed traction, and enabled Cletus to pivot at 180-degree angles in order to grab one pig, then turn to quickly grab another.

Therefore, Jerry Rice is second only to Jim Thorpe.

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