

The Tradition: 2021 Mix Album

"The songs, sounds, albums, and artists that defined the year for me." That's what was scribbled on the CD insert of what became the first of a nearly 20-year personal tradition. A couple of years ago, I outlined the evolution of this compilation custom at davidullman.net/mixalbums. There you'll find links to listen, learn about, and download all 18 annual mixes.

Here you'll uncover the context behind the inclusion of the 19 songs I elected to represent my experience of 2021, as well as some background on the artists and their inspirations.

I hope you find—or are reminded of—something here that adds something positive to your life.

- David Ullman, January 2022

"In The Air Tonight" by The Protomen

This is Protomen's first appearance on one of my mix albums.

I first heard this badass version of the Phil Collins classic in the final moments of *Cobra Kai* season 3 and found it on The Protomen's 2015 album [The Cover Up \(Original Motion Picture Soundtrack\)](#). Similar to the Meg Meyers 2019 recording of Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill" (which I included on [that year's mix album](#)), the Protomen cover remains faithful to the arrangement and menacing spirit of the original, while also bringing contemporary vitality to the production. I particularly love when singer Raul Panther III lets rip, "I can feel it—coming in the aaaaaiiiiiir" as Phil Collins would often do live.

The strains of "Silent Running" at the end were not added by me. *The Cover Up* album is a 15-track concept record/rock opera in which 80's classics such as these—as well others, one more awesome than the next ("Danger Zone," "No Easy Way Out")—are sequenced between short, evocative clips of dialog and news reports that convey an action film story of sorts set in a dystopian future. Given the way the first week of 2021 went, the malevolent foreboding seemed appropriate.

"No Son Of Mine" by Foo Fighters

Foo Fighters kicked off my 2015 mix album, [Break The Cycle](#).

Dropping on January 1, this lead single from the Foo's *Medicine at Midnight* drips with boiling irony. "Lyrically it's meant to poke at the hypocrisy of self-righteous leaders, people that are guilty of committing the crimes they're supposedly against," Dave Grohl said at the time. Listening to it now, it seems almost prescient, and I can't help but set it in my mind's eye to news footage of the January 6th insurrection.

"More To Learn" by Zach & The Bright Lights

Zach has songs on [2004](#), [2007](#), [2008](#), [2009](#), [2011](#), [2020](#)

From Zach's 23rd release, [Automagical](#), this song was originally co-written with fellow Northeast Ohian Charlie Mosbrook and recorded for the [2013 Provenance charity album](#). Even though I also appear on that acoustically-based album and had certainly heard "More To Learn" a time or two before, the song

didn't break through for me until hearing this more dynamic representation recorded, mixed, and mastered by Nate Vaill at the Rialto Theatre in the Kenmore neighborhood of Akron, OH. I've had the privilege of working with Nate as well and am so impressed with what he, Zach, and The Bright Lights accomplished with the *Automagical* album.

In addition to the pure pleasure of the melodies and production, I find the lyrics refreshing and the chorus a healthy mantra, reminding me not to fall prey to mental atrophy and closed-minded confirmation bias.

"Revolutionary Love" by Ani DiFranco

[2004](#), [2006](#), [2007](#), [2008](#), [2009](#), [2010](#), [2012](#), [2016](#), [2020](#)

Like Zach, Ani appeared on [my inaugural 2004 mix album](#) and multiple times over the years since (this being the 11th!). I first heard her music when Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder played "Fuel" on the 1998 Monkey Wrench Radio broadcast. I bought a bootleg CD of the radio show, which included the song from her *Little Plastic Castle* album and was always struck by Ani's way with words. However, I didn't start seeking out her records on my own until 2004 when my friend Larry recommended her *To The Teeth* (1999) CD. That album's nearly eight-minute, opening-title-track-tirade incited by the Columbine High School massacre inspired me to go back through her already prodigious back catalog.

I have generally preferred her earlier, angrier, and seemingly more urgent offerings. However, the lengthy lead-off namesake of her latest album consistently moves me. Over the "lushly textured jazz-pop" she's favored in recent years, DiFranco delivers a mission-statement lyric.

*i will tend my anger
i will tend my grief
i will achieve safety
i will find relief
i'll show myself mercy
i'll show my self-respect
i'll decide when i'm ready
to forgive but not forget
i will ask you questions
i will try to understand
and if you give me your story
i will hold it in my hands*

She goes on to sing and repeat the titular phrase and recite a set of instructive, resilient, compassionate, and conversational verses borrowed and adapted from the work of Sikh-American activist/filmmaker/lawyer/author Valarie Kaur.

I only learned of this connection through researching this passage about 24 hours ago. I started with [Kaur's transcendent TED talk](#), moved on to her further illuminating [appearance on Layla Saad's Good Ancestor podcast](#), and am now listening to her book, *See No Stranger*.

"Deep End" by Joe Pug

[2009](#), [2010](#), [2012](#), [2015](#), [2019](#)

Since seeing him open for Josh Ritter at Cleveland's Beachland Ballroom in 2009, there's been at least one song from every Joe Pug release that's made it onto the corresponding year's mix album. He's gotta be in my top-five contemporary singer/songwriters—if I were one to make such lists (I do not, as I'd be Rob Gordon calling that journalist in *High Fidelity* so many times to revise his list that she tells him never to call again).

Pug is not one for sentimentality, and the admonishment he sings in "Deep End" is the kind of tough-love tune where the "you" in the lyric can just as easily be yourself as anyone else.

"Isn't Everyone" by HEALTH & Nine Inch Nails

This is Health's first appearance. Nine Inch Nails have songs on [2005](#), [2007](#), [2008](#), [2013](#), [2014](#), [2016](#) (as Trent Reznor), [2017](#), [2018](#), [2020](#)

When Trent Reznor won his second Academy Award for Best Original Score (for the Disney Pixar film *Soul*), he told interviewers that he and his writing partner Atticus Ross would be working on new Nine Inch Nails material, "as soon as probably tomorrow." Within weeks, this collaboration with noise-rock band HEALTH was released and instantly became my favorite NIN track since 2017's "Less Than."

Reznor's seething first verse is vintage Nine Inch Nails. It sounds like something from *The Fragile*, the "little piggies" from *The Downward Spiral* are present, and the "serve/deserve" rhyme of the chorus seems like the 30-year-echo of NIN's breakthrough single "Head Like A Hole"—swapping defiance for resignation (or maybe just recognition) and the "I" for "we."

"I think at the time it was written," HEALTH singer Jake Duzsik told David Farrier, "we were in the middle of Trumpocalypse and George Floyd and so there is some pretty poignant messaging relating to that specific experience." Duzsik didn't get too specific, though, adding elsewhere in a separate statement, "It's fucking Nine Inch Nails. That speaks for itself. You don't need a clever quote to encapsulate it."

"The Tradition" by Halsey

This is Halsey's first appearance on one of my mix albums.

The title track of this year's compilation is borrowed from my favorite album of 2021, Halsey's *If I Can't Have Love, I Want Power*. I was not familiar with the 27-year-old pop star's music, and on the surface, a concept piece centering on the emotional complexities of pregnancy didn't seem like it was aimed at me. However, I was intrigued by [the cover image tweeted out from @nineinchnails](#) with the announcement that the record was produced by Reznor & Ross. I loved it on first listen—especially as a whole.

The album has the scope and variety of mid-nineties alternative records. There's dirty garage rock ("Easier Than Lying"), dark dance/techno ("Girl Is A Gun"), sultry hip-hop ("Lilith"), and even a bright-

but-bare-bones ballad sung against only an arpeggio acoustic guitar (“Darling”). The overall mood is ominous, yet there are also carefree joyous moments (“Honey”). There are big choruses, irresistible hooks, and lyrics that are somehow both cryptic and confessional.

I love how the iTunes Review puts it. “Lyrically, it’s like an emptying of [Halsey’s] emotional vault and coming to terms with who they have been before becoming responsible for someone else; its fury is a response to an ancient dilemma, as they’ve experienced it.”

For me on this, the record’s opening track, the singer’s ire extends from sexism and patriarchy to colonialism and white supremacy—all of it anchored by Reznor’s unmistakable piano phrasing and signature production style. If you’re compelled by any of it, I highly encourage you to give the whole album a go.

"Dal Segno" by fascist puppeteer

Previous Mix Album Appearances: [2019](#), and as Brian Ullman in [2012](#), [2013](#)

My brother Brian’s latest release from his one-man-band pseudonym has him teaming up with his old [Circle Of Willis](#) bandmate Zack Kelly. Circle Of Willis was their rock band decades ago, and you can see them playing to packed houses in [Live at The Odeon \(1999-2001\)](#), a new compilation of old performances from one of Cleveland’s premiere concert clubs. The two of them once did an impromptu acoustic gig as Red Eye Highway and titled this EP collaboration the same. Look for a 20th anniversary expanded edition of the Circle Of Willis album later this year on [dreamingoutloudrecords.com](#)

"You Should Be Dancing" by Dee Gees

This is the Dee Gees' first appearance on one of my mix albums. (I hope it's not the last.)

I’m not sure where I first heard this gleeful cover of the Bee Gee’s disco classic. It was either coming across the music video on YouTube or possibly the glorious tweet capturing the Foo Fighters playing this song in counter-protest to one of America’s most notorious hate groups outside their concert in Kansas. Dressed in their whitest, frilliest disco attire, The Dee Gees assembled atop a flatbed truck to perform for the protestors from the Westboro Baptist Church who had gathered with their “God Hates” signs near the Azura Amphitheater for the Foo Fighters 25/26th Anniversary Tour stop.

As you can [see in the cell phone video clip](#), the truck stops in front of the picketers (one of which is obviously swaying to the music), and Dave Grohl declares his love for them and a word of advice. “The way I look at it, I love everybody. That’s what you’re supposed to do.... You shouldn’t be hating. You should be dancing!”

“You Should Be Dancing” is one of five Bee Gees covers comprising Side A of the Seattle-based band’s 2021 Record Store Day release, *Hail Satin*.

"We Are The People (feat. Bono & The Edge)" by Martin Garrix

U2 appears on [2004](#), [2014](#), [2017](#), [2019](#).

The Official UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) Championship anthem for the delayed 2020 tournament pairs 25-year-old Dutch DJ and producer Martin Garrix with U2's Bono and The Edge. Since 1992, the sports competition has commissioned a song to commemorate the events and act as a rallying cry.

Opening with a slightly new spin on The Edge's signature guitar delay, Bono sings a resolute lyric with an epic chorus that leverages the three musicians' strengths to soaring heights.

From U2.Com:

'We Are The People' reminds us that a song can look at the challenges facing the world at a given time and still attempt a unified response. It is a hymn sheet from which we can all sing wherever we may come from, but especially in Europe where the [UEFA] competition will capture the attention of the whole world. 'We Are The People' hopes to reflect the positivity, hope and determination required for any team to succeed, as well as offer a sense of togetherness which fits the theme of UEFA EURO 2020: Unity. For the first time in EURO history, the tournament is being played across the continent, which will display the overriding theme of unity throughout.

Though it's presented in the context of a football tournament, it's easy to hear this song as an anthem of "Revolutionary Love" that would fit in perfectly before "Pride (In The Name of Love)" on U2's next tour.

"Like Water" by Alicia Keys

Alicia Keys first appeared on my 2020 mix album, [Conscience Calls](#).

Having finally embraced Alicia Keys in 2020, I checked in on her towards the end of 2021 and was struck by this starkly beautiful piano ballad from her double album, *Keys*. "Like Water" is one of the only songs on the collection (a cleverly titled follow-up to 2020's *Alicia*) that doesn't have a corresponding "Unlocked" remix. From the gentle, jazzy beginning to the bit of grit in her voice as she belts out the final refrain, it's hard to imagine an improvement on this simple and stirring performance. Bonus points for reminding me of [the Bruce Lee quote](#).

"Rather Be Home" by Eddie Vedder & Glen Hansard

[2004](#), [2005](#), [2006](#), [2007](#) (The Frames), [2008](#), [2009](#) (Swell Season), [2006](#), [2007](#), [2012](#), [2014](#), [2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#), [2018](#), [2019](#), [2020](#) (GH), [2009](#), [2013](#), [2017](#), [2018](#), [2020](#) (Pearl Jam) [2007](#), [2011](#) (EV).

Two of my favorite musicians and stalwart mainstays of my annual mixes. Whether fronting their respective rock bands or as solo artists, Eddie Vedder (Pearl Jam) and Glen Hansard (The Frames) have appeared on nearly all of the 18 compilations—often multiple times a year.

Vedder set my expectations of a singer during my adolescence, and Hansard was the last discernable influence on me as a singer/songwriter myself in my twenties and thirties. The two became friends [in the wake of a tragedy](#) and first toured together in 2011.

This acoustic guitar duet with Vedder's wordless vocal is one of the eight songs they co-wrote for the soundtrack of Sean Penn's latest directorial effort, *Flag Day*. The stand-out track of the companion album is "My Father's Daughter," which is sung by Vedder's real-life daughter Olivia, but there's something about this cue from the score that compelled me most. I think it's the melodies and Ed's expressive singing. It's warm... comforting... like home.

"Bloody Waters" by H. E. R.

H.E.R. first appeared on my 2020 mix album, [Conscience Calls](#).

The R&B artist formerly known as Gabi Wilson evokes Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)" on this cut from her latest album, *Back of My Mind*. She made a seismic impact on me with her 2020 single "I Can't Breathe," and I really appreciate H.E.R. (standing for "Having Everything Revealed") talent and perspective—perhaps even more so now that I know she is only 24-years-old!

*Can't make no sense about it
Tired of hearing about it
We ain't talking about it
We don't wanna see
Can't make no sense about it
Get so anxious about it
We keep talking around it
Reassess it, yeah*

"I am not a woman, I'm a god (Live)" by Halsey

The first of a series of "Live from Los Angeles" performances posted to their YouTube page throughout 2021 directed by dance choreographer Dani Vitale in which Halsey looks straight into the camera and sings almost all of the *If I Can't Have Love, I Want Power* album. I missed this at the time, but it turns out these clips are segmented from a 45-minute ["one night only \[...\] global performance experience"](#) hosted by Moment House.

Director Vitale also worked on the 53-minute IMAX narrative companion film for the album written by (and starring) Halsey which more fully develops the Madonna/Whore dichotomy underlying the songs and gives the themes a specific context seemingly set in a *Game-of-Thrones*-influenced version of the mid-1400s. [The trailer](#) I first saw in July casts this tale among "the greatest horror stories never told." It's now streaming on HBO Max and available to rent/download from Apple.

I hope the full "Live from Los Angeles" presentation gets released elsewhere also because, though the highly-stylized staging and lighting effects are compelling, it's the raw power of Halsey's voice that

really appeals to me here. The musical arrangement is pared down from the album version, and there's no band visible in the video. It's like a highly-produced, full-dress tour rehearsal for the singer, and it sounds fucking awesome! When their voice opens up towards the end, I get goosebumps every time.

"Memory" by Kane Brown x blackbear

This is both Kane Brown and blackbear's first appearance on one of my mix albums.

I first heard this song while walking laps around my local hockey rink during a period break. It was playing over the PA, and all I could really make out was the melody. Once I got back to my seat, I did a search on my phone for what I thought I heard of the lyrics and eventually found this collaboration between Tennessee-based country singer Kane Brown and a record producer who creates and performs under the name blackbear from Florida.

Lyrics are usually the first thing I connect to about a song (second only to the singer's voice), and I try to be careful about the messages carried by the tracks I collect—especially those I put on these mix albums. I used to be so precise about what was sung by the various artists that I once edited out a verse from a song—not because it was offensive in some way—just because it was not a lyric that I would sing myself. In the last few years, especially, I've widened the scope of what I include to amplify voices and perspectives that I empathize with but also reflect a lived experience I could never have. It's a kind of solidarity (I hope).

Relieved that my Googling revealed lyrics that were searching and substantive, I downloaded the track when I got home and often listen on repeat.

Another organizing principle of my selection process is the alignment of the content with the calendar year. These need to be songs new to me and also represent a facet of the feelings I lived through during that designated time period. For instance, when I first started making these mix albums in 2004, I was going through a divorce in my mid-twenties. I'm now in my early 40s and have been happily married for over a decade, so you won't find any break-up or just-getting-together songs in the compilations since 2011.

That's all to say that encountering this song by happenstance and instantly falling for it based on melody alone put me through my paces. I'm happy to report that I am not actively struggling to the extent Brown and blackbear outline here, but I have—and do still, on occasion.

"I Guess I Just Feel Like" by John Mayer

Previous appearances: [2006](#), [2008](#)

I don't know if it's meant to, but this song pushes my buttons. Maybe it's because its lyrical list of "feelings" are not emotions or sensations but rather a series of defeatist and self-pitying platitudes. Maybe it's just John Mayer's face and public profile. Then again, maybe... It's just me. Because like Mayer says at the end of the first stanza... After a string of statements condemning everyone else that agitate me to the point of wanting to skip the track, he concludes with, "I'm the same way too."

It surprised me to learn that this song—which I've come to know through the now 44-year old singer, songwriter, and guitarist's 1980's-infused 2021 album *Sob Rock*—first started making the rounds on the Internet back in 2018 when he [performed it live at iHeartRadio](#). In [this article](#) on bluesrockreview.com, I came across a #ThrowbackThursday Instagram post in which Mayer shares a picture of the day he quickly composed the song and writes about the moment where he set aside all of the gadgets he was using in pursuit of his next big hit to just sit with his Martin D-45 acoustic and get back to basics.

As a guy-with-guitar songwriter myself, it's easy to imagine the moment where he must have exhaled and simply asked himself, "how do I feel right now?" In the IG post, he says, "I decided I'd had just about enough of myself, and that's always when the good stuff starts." It sounds like the song nearly wrote itself after that.

I know the real reason the lyrics of "I Guess I Just Feel Like" (and John Mayer in general) get my dander up is because they're confronting me with things that frustrate me about myself—things I need to keep working on. That's why I especially love the turn the song takes at the end.

*But I know that I'm open
And I know that I'm free
And I'll always let hope in
Wherever I'll be
And if I go blind I'll still find my way
I guess I just felt like
Giving up today*

I have to admit, it's a helluva feat to bring a listener from bristling resistance and resentment to teary-eyed, heart-aching resilience in a four-and-a-half-minute song. And this happens most every time I hear this track! Tag on an 80s-toned guitar solo outro, and you've got yourself a fan (again).

"Mama Werewolf" by Brandi Carlile

This is Brandi Carlile's first solo track on one of my mixes. Her duet with Alicia Keys, "A Beautiful Noise" appears on 2020: [Conscience Calls](#).

Of the ten tracks comprising her 2021 album *In These Silent Days*, seven of them were contenders for this year's mix. The 40-year-old Seattle-based singer/songwriter wrote the songs for her latest record during the early days of the pandemic on the heels of finishing her memoir, *Broken Horses*.

I can remember seeing Carlile's name on the marquee of The Kent Stage during my college days, but I had somehow mixed her up in my mind with Belinda Carlisle (of the Go-Go's). Later, I registered her as a friend and collaborator of Mike McCready (of Pearl Jam). But it wasn't until my wife kept blasting her 2017 song "The Joke" that I finally took proper notice.

Speaking with Apple music's Zane Lowe [in this video interview](#) conducted around a campfire in the rural Washington State woods where she lives, Carlile mentions "The Joke" as a creative breakthrough—a development she wanted to explore further on her follow-up album. In that same interview, she refers to the title of that record (*In These Silent Days*) as a question.

"I want to invite people to reflect, because it's such a pivotal time in human history, and a real spiritual upheaval for so many people in really positive and really negative, complicated ways. What did you learn? What did you make of yourself? What did you lose? What happened to you in this time?"

So much of what she sings about on the record resonates with me. Ultimately, of the seven songs I came close to putting on the compilation, I chose "Mama Werewolf" because it was the track that affected me most viscerally. Singing as a parent determined not to pass on the mistreatment she suffered to her own children, Carlile's use of werewolf mythology as the metaphor for cycles of dysfunction simply kills me:

*If my good intentions go running wild
If I cause you pain, my own sweet child
Won't you promise me you'll be the one
My silver bullet in the gun
Would you strike me down
Right where I stand?
Would you change me back?
Make me kind again?
Won't you promise me you'll be the one
My silver bullet in the gun*

"The Children Will Rise Up!" by Nandi Bushell & Roman Morello

Nandi previously appeared on my 2020 mix album, [Conscience Calls](#).

I'm realizing I mention artists' ages a lot in these paragraphs. It's notable for me in regard to the ones I've been following for years to realize how old they are now and how long they've been at it. For the younger ones like H.E.R. (24), Martin Garrix (25), and Halsey (27) I'm humbled by (and a bit envious of) what they've achieved so early in life. However, the ages of the team behind this song—11-year-old drumming dynamo Nandi Bushell and 10-year-old guitar player Roman Morello—are shocking.

Last year, I wrote about my wife introducing me to Nandi's joyous and badass drumming in the paragraph about her song, "Rock and Grohl - The EPIC Battle." Since then, the precocious and preternaturally talented pre-teen has continued upping her game as a musician. Posting drum covers on [her YouTube page](#) of bands as diverse and challenging as Tool and Slipknot to a loop-station-based instrumental of Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine" (on which she plays guitar, bass, drums, and saxophone!), she has impressed everyone from the aforementioned (Dave) Grohl to her bandmate Roman's father: Tom Morello. Nandi became the first "kid musician in residence" at The Cartoon Network, the youngest person to ever make the cover of *Modern Drummer* magazine, and even joined her formal rival's band, Foo Fighters, on stage in California to [play drums on "Everlong" for 17,000 people!](#)

In the [music video](#) for this song, Jack Black bookends the performance, bidding Nandi and Roman go forth and "rock the world!" There's also a quick "rise up" cameo from Greta Thunberg and proud-pappa Morello, who mouths the words "that's my son!" during Roman's guitar solo.

Joining forces with the global youth climate movement started by Thunberg, "The Children Will Rise Up" is part benefit single (proceeds go to [The SOS Pantanal Institute](#)), part educational outreach effort (Nandi gives a 30-second micro lecture on climate crisis science at the end), and part impassioned plea to adults to pressure those in power to "come together in unity and love to tackle humanity's biggest problem before it's too late!"

"I cannot vote, but I can raise awareness and protest for climate change," Nandi says in the post-script portion of the song's video. Then, she points her finger at the camera and admonishes:

Adults... Politicians... Stop playing political games with our future. Stop fighting each other!
Children... Rise up! You can do anything you put your minds to [...] Be kind, be loving, be sensible, be respectful, but be powerful! You have a voice. Use it!

It's one thing to read, but I defy you not to be moved watching her say it.

"Silent Running (On Dangerous Ground)" by The Protomen

Even though it's a 2015 cover of a song originally released in 1985, choosing this as the closing track for my 2021 mix album seemed almost a foregone conclusion once I'd elected to include Protomen's cover of "In The Air Tonight." At the end of that track on the *Cover Up* album (mentioned above), The Protomen include a synth-snippet of "Silent Running." That was my first reason for placing it at the end of this compilation. It seemed to bring the arc of the mix album full circle. I also like how the juxtaposition of it after "The Children Will Rise Up!" creates a new context for both songs.

*Take the children and yourself
And hide out in the cellar...*

*... some day sons and daughters
Will rise up and fight while we stood still*

My frame of reference for "Silent Running" is its use in the atmospheric opening scene of the 1987-88 Fox TV series *Werewolf*. I loved that show as a kid; and after having foolishly recorded over my VHS tapes of its original airing, I've bought no less than three bootleg sets over the years to rewatch it. The series was short-lived, but [articles like this one](#) have heralded it as a "hidden gem."

After 33 years, French-based [Elephant Films released the program commercially on DVD](#). Unfortunately, even though the six-disc boxset bears the Sony logo, the quality is substandard. Like a lot of fans, I really wish the aborted 2009 Shout Factory release had come out. For a while, [the Amazon listing](#) even detailed the special features. Coincidentally, it's very likely this Mike + The Mechanics song was among those of a couple of "unnamed artists" whose asking price for music licensing sunk the planned release.

The transfers may not be great on the French import, but they are better than any on the bootlegs or ephemeral YouTube postings, and I watched one a week throughout 2021. That's partially what led me to pick "Mamma Werewolf" from the many contenders on Brandi Carlile's *Silent Days* album.

I'd never looked into the possible meaning behind "Silent Running," but I knew there was an old film by that name and figured it had been written and recorded for that project. Turns out it was attached to a different film, which was called *On Dangerous Ground* (*Choke Canyon* in the U.S.), and which—like *Werewolf*—was also scored by Hungarian synth-meister Sylvester Levay. According to Wikipedia, songwriter Mike Rutherford says the song, "is about a guy who's traveled light-years away, out in space somewhere, and he's ahead in time. Therefore he knows what's going to happen to his wife and kids back home, on Earth. And he's trying to get the message to them to say what's going to happen, the kind of anarchy, the breakdown of society, to tell them to be prepared."