

Demarcation: 2019 Mix Album

"I'll Be You Be Me" by Glen Hansard - Also the opening track from the album from which it comes ([This Wild Willing](#)), this song reminds me of Hansard's work with The Frames. A very common trait of a Glen Hansard song is for his voice to build to a braying bellow. However, due to a "persistent chest infection" at the time of recording, many of the songs on *This Wild Willing* build the music instead--to great effect. This song, in particular, is based around a sample collaborator David Cleary matched to a chord progression Hansard was playing in the studio. I learned of this watching [an interview with Glen Hansard at the Strand Book Store](#) on YouTube. It's a fun anecdote involving Hansard, Bono, and Brian May. The album's release ended up being delayed a month as the publishing was sorted out, but you'll here it's well worth it.

"Pour Me Out Of This Town" by Wheeler Bryson - This song came to my attention in a pretty roundabout way. I'm a loyal listener to Marc Maron's [WTF podcast](#). I always listen to Maron's introductions but often fall behind on the interviews--unless it's someone in whom I already have an interest. Actor [Stephen Dorff](#) was on the show promoting his turn on season three of HBO's crime anthology *True Detective*. I grew up watching Dorff play smart-ass gen-x types in movies like *SFW*, *Judgement Night*, *Rescue Me*, and *Entropy* (those are just the ones I own on home video). He spent much of the interview telling Marc about his sibling, Nashville songwriter Andrew Dorff, who passed away in late 2016. Out of respect for his brother, the actor never wanted to make an album of the songs he wrote on the side. But he did find a home for them as the character Wheeler Bryson in a documentary-style drama directed by his friend Ryan Ross, the premise of which involves Dorff's character traveling to Nashville to see how his songs are received by the country music community there. Wearing just enough makeup to conceal his identity, Stephen Dorff sings his songs at open mics and for actual members of Music City's songwriting scene. *Wheeler* is a very sweet, understated, charming movie and this song's ear-worm chorus is pretty irresistible.

"The Flood In Color" by Joe Pug - Like Glen Hansard and several other artists here, Pug has been a mainstay of my mixes for years. I first heard his literate and resilient lyrics watching him open for Josh Ritter at The Beachland Ballroom in 2009. His set-closing song "[Hymn #101](#)" blew my mind, and I've kept up with him ever since. *The Flood In Color* is his fourth full-length album, but it's the first to not quite knock me over--at least on first listen. Perhaps I should give it another go because the title track here has really grown on me. Using remarkably [few words](#), Pug evokes the potentially crippling consequences of personal, political, and even environmental inaction.

"I Know What It's Like" by Jeff Tweedy - While I haven't kept up with their catalog since 2007's *Sky Blue Sky*, I do like a lot of Wilco's music--especially *Being There* through *A Ghost Is Born* and the outstanding documentary *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart*. So, when Wilco front-man Jeff Tweedy turned up on WTF I listened right away. Tweedy's a very humble and personable guy; and like the Stephen Dorff interview I mentioned above, it's a really good conversation. At the end of it, Maron asks for a song. Tweedy played this one, which also happens to appear on his 2018 solo album [Warm](#). This same interview also reminded me to seek out his autobiography *Let's Go (So We Can Get Back)*, which I can't recommend enough if you like that sort of thing. I both laughed and cried reading it, and that's not very common for me when it comes to books.

"Hello Sunshine" by Bruce Springsteen - From *Western Stars*, The Boss' first new set of songs in five years, the lyrics of "Hello Sunshine" remind the singer not to veer too far towards his tendency to isolate. *You know I always liked my walking shoes / But you can get a little too fond of the blues / You walk too far, you walk away / Hello sunshine, won't you stay?*

"Destine Odyssey" by Fascist Puppeteer - My brother Brian released two collections of music this year under the one-man-band moniker "Fascist Puppeteer." I'll say a bit more about them in their second (and third) entries below, but I describe this song as Pink Floyd meets *The Downward Spiral*. Brian delivers a spoken word soliloquy of lyrics that are at once direct and oblique over a lonely bed of haunting slide guitar before erupting into a searingly expressive solo.

"Howling" by Cathedrals - I overheard this one playing during a scene from the Amazon Prime series *Jack Ryan*. My wife was watching it in another room, but the music and singer Brodie Jenkins' voice drew me in. I immediately set about trying to find it online and learned the version on the show was actually a cover of a collaboration between Australian singer-songwriter RY X and German musician Frank Wiedemann. I ultimately found the Cathedrals version as a single on iTunes.

"Fool's Game" by Glen Hansard - The recorded version of this track is built around the robotic harmonies of Hansard singing into a vocoder, but the song really came alive for me when I heard him perform it with minimal accompaniment in that same Strand Book Store YouTube video linked above. The simple renditions and contextualizations of the songs in that two-hour video made me revisit *This Wild Willing* with renewed interest. When I did so I was most struck by the female voice singing the outro. Here's what Hansard wrote in the album's extensive liner notes about how that bit got added on: At the end of one of the takes that we played out a little longer, Aida Shaghasemi, who'd been playing Daf, began to sing a ghazal by the great Persian poet Rumi: "How could I know that this longing would drive me so crazy; That it would make my heart a prison, and my eyes a river?" It was so powerful and moving, that it's now part of the song forever. Thank you, Aida." Thank you, indeed.

"Sundown (Film Version)" by Bruce Springsteen - Another entry from *Western Stars*--except this version comes from the film of the same name that also happens to mark the (co)directorial debut of The Boss himself. "Touching on themes of love and loss, loneliness and family and the inexorable passage of time, the documentary film evokes the American West—both the mythic and the hardscrabble—weaving archival footage and Springsteen's personal narration with performances of all 13 songs from the album *Western Stars* backed by a band and a full orchestra, under the cathedral ceiling of his historic nearly 100-year-old barn." (From the description on bruce.springsteen.net). I had the pleasure of seeing this film on the big screen during its limited theatrical run, but it's out now on home video. If you're a Bruce fan, it's a must-see. ([Watch the trailer](#))

"You Will Be Found" by Ben Platt and the Broadway Cast of *Dear Evan Hansen* - From one unforgettable theatrical experience to another--except this one was of the Broadway variety. My wife and I took two trips to NYC in 2019 to see plays and musicals. We saw Bryan Cranston in *Network*, Jeff Daniels in *To Kill A Mockingbird*, and even Joey McIntyre in *Waitress*. He was my favorite NKOTB. But I digress... On our second trip we went to the Tony Award®-winning Best

Musical (2017) *Dear Evan Hansen*, the story of "a young man with social anxiety disorder who so yearns to make a connection with his peers that he fabricates a relationship with a deceased student to become closer to the boy's family." ([Read the rest here](#)). I went in without expectation. I didn't even know about the Best Musical award at the time. I was swept away by the writing, the music, and the remarkably raw performance of [Andrew Barth Feldman in the title role](#). It was so emotionally charged, I found I couldn't even talk about it at intermission. Instead, I immediately marched down to the basement of the Music Box Theatre to buy the blue vinyl soundtrack album. Unfortunately, we would return to that basement after the show when what turned out to be a backfiring motorcycle was mistaken for [an active shooter in Times Square](#). Shellshocked from the show and filing out of the theater onto West 45th Street after the curtain call, we were driven back into the building by a stampede of hundreds of people fleeing in panic. My wife and I gathered with two other theatergoers in the basement coat closet a few feet from where I'd purchased the record and a Christmas Tree ornament during intermission. Even though I was knocked to the ground in the melee, both items were still in tact. After a few terrifying minutes one of the other people hunkered down with us got word on his cell phone from his family above that the coast was clear. This harrowing coda to the evening only intensifies my memory of seeing the play *The Washington Post* calls "one of the most remarkable shows in musical theater history." *Dear Evan Hansen* is touring across the USA and Canada in 2020. If you can get to it, I highly recommend doing so. Check if it's coming to your neck of the woods by visiting <https://dearevanhansen.com/tour>.

"Love It If We Made It" by The 1975 - I remember seeing this British band on SNL a few years ago and finding their singer Matthew Healy's wardrobe and stage persona supremely irritating. Again recently as I sat down to research this paragraph, I tried to listen to an interview with him talking about this song, and I had to shut it off. Of course these aversions have much more to do with my own hang-ups than anything else. I just mention them to emphasize how undeniable I find this song. In August, my pal Palmer flew out to Minnesota to visit me and see his favorite film, *The Goonies*, twice in two days at The Alamo Drafthouse. [We had a great time](#) watching this "kid adventure classic" on the silver screen and dedicated [Episode 76 of our Long Walk Short Drink podcast](#) to a spirited discussion thereof. I mention that here because it was on the drive up to The Alamo Drafthouse theater that Palmer introduced me to this track. He was entertaining me with an on-the-fly playlist of his then favorites from the SiriusXM ALT Nation channel (36). As you may glean from the repeat artists and general demographics of my mix rosters from the last few years, there's very little I'm connecting with in contemporary music. Furthermore, there are a lot of sinister things happening in the world. Our darker impulses have been stoked and embolden by a malignant rise in the acceptance of narcissistic, hateful behavior, and political actions. This song, while referencing some of those things in its scattered, son sequitur stream-of-conscious verses comes back to a chorus of jubilant abandon and hope that makes this all-too-often grumpy guy want to dance in the face of it all.

"Running Up That Hill" by Meg Myers - This faithful Kate Bush cover seemed everywhere in 2019, and whenever I heard it my ears perked right up. Previously, I'd only ever heard Meg Meyers on my friend Kevin Conaway's annual mixes, but this really got my attention. For anyone reading this who is a fan of hers, what other songs and/or albums do you think I would like?

"Ahimsa" by U2 & A. R. Rahman - This collaboration between U2 and Indian composer/producer A. R. Rahman was a nice surprise, which dropped just as the world-famous Irish band played their first ever performance in India. The following is excerpted from [an article on U2.com](#): 'Ahimsa' – the Sanskrit word for non-violence - celebrates the spiritual diversity of India and connects the ethos of U2 with the mastery of A.R. Rahman. [Bono:] "[U2] were somewhat shaped and formed by Martin Luther King who was a student of Mahatma Gandhi. Martin Luther King said 'The moral arc of the universe is long but it bends towards justice....' I don't believe that anymore... It doesn't bend towards justice, it has to be bent towards justice. We have to be actively involved in our democracy to preserve it and show people how we feel and what we care about. We come as students to the source of inspiration. That is Ahimsa... non-violence. India gave this to us... the greatest gift to the world. It is more powerful than nuclear energy, the armies, the navy's, the British Empire. It is power itself. And it's never been more important."

"Reflection" and "Demarcation" by Fascist Puppeteer - Way back in 2010 I remember taking my brother Brian out to dinner and pitching to him my plan to combine some of the best tracks from a couple of albums he made with bands that didn't ultimately get released with songs he was posting to his Fascist Puppeteer MySpace page at the time. I proposed the album be called "Mixtape" and offered to put it out on Dreaming Out Loud Records, which was an LLC in Ohio at the time. Starting with my brother's back-catalog, I wanted to start releasing my friends' music through the label. In 2014, I started to do so in more of a non-profit, "always free to download" capacity at [dreamingoutloudrecords.com](#). It's more "records," as in "the sum of the past achievements or actions of a person or organization" than "record label" now, but it's been a joy to populate. In the last six weeks alone, I've added 11 collections to the site--all free to stream and download with bonus items aplenty. The first "Dreaming Out Loud" logo appeared on one of my projects with this crew 20 years ago, so it seemed like a good time to flesh out the library. There are presently 33 offerings there, with another half-dozen soon to follow. In 2019, two of those releases came from Brian's Fascist Puppeteer project. In February, he made good on [Mixtape](#), which is an eclectic compilation of songs covering everything from rock ("It's Not Too Late," "The Party's Over"), acoustic jams ("Leave Again," "Walls Crashing," "Dreaming Of Escape"), smooth jazz instrumental ("The Wave"), and even hilarious-and-actually-awesome rap ("Sunset Cruise," "Shit Son"). As suggested by the band name, Brian pulls all the strings--writing, singing, playing, and programming nearly every sound you hear. As [Mixtape](#) is a compilation of songs collected over a nearly decade, the track I decided to include here is an instrumental recorded in 2012, appropriately titled "Reflection." I feel it highlights the strong sense of melody and emotional content in his guitar playing.

"Reflection is paired with another Fascist Puppeteer song--this one from his outstanding follow-up, [Practicing Synthesis](#), which came out in November. "Demarcation" is an understated acoustic-based ballad with a relaxed vocal and reflective, soul-searching lyrics. [Practicing Synthesis](#) is my favorite release of 2019, and I'm very proud to have had a hand in presenting it. Both this record and [Mixtape](#) can be downloaded for free at [dreamingoutloudrecords.com](#) and found wherever you stream music (Apple, Amazon, iTunes, Spotify, Google Play, YouTube, etc.)

"Don't Settle" by Glen Hansard - This third (and final) appearance of a song from *This Wild Willing* is the only of the album's 12 tracks to not have been recorded during Hansard's 2018 artist residency in Paris. As such, it features a healthy full-throated vocal from the dynamic singer ending in a paraphrased bit of advice passed on to him from folk singer Liam Clancy. In the liner notes for *This Wild Willing* Hansard writes, "The line 'No envy, no anger, no cruelty, no regrets' comes from a conversation I once had with Liam Clancy who told me a great Bob Dylan story, in which he used that line as advice to the young giant. It always stayed with me." I include it here in the hopes I can remind myself of it from time to time:

No envy, no anger, no cruelty, no regrets
No jealousy, no rancour, no confusion; don't forget
No enemy, no anger, no incredulity; show respect
No envy, no anger, no judgement on no one; lest you forget
Lest you forget what they did to you
Come on, rise off your knees, you're not beaten yet

"Move On" by Wheeler Bryson - I find it rare that lyricists allow themselves the sort of simple, direct, and open-hearted approach Stephen Dorff does here. I suspect having the character of Wheeler to sing them helps. It may also have something to do with the lifelong influence of Dorff's father, who is [a Hall Of Fame songwriter](#). In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, the actor explains:

I had a really cool movie I was supposed to do in Rome that, for whatever reason, got pushed. So I'm sitting around and writing songs. Not doing it like my brother does it, where he's getting paid and getting cuts. I'm just doing it for me in my house in L.A. I was going to a studio in Burbank that my dad recommended. My voice was pretty straight and didn't have the country twang of Wheeler. It was a little more like Jack Johnson, maybe Lumineers. I had written four songs. I played it for my dad, I played a song for Rick Rubin; and Ryan Ross, who directed the movie, came to Malibu. We worked together very intimately for about five years doing a lot of movies, like *Somewhere*. He was blown away by the four songs and we started talking. He said, "Ok, let's make a movie." I said, "What kind of movie? What am I going to play, a pop guy? A DJ?" Because some of my songs had electro-beats to them. The only place I could really see creating a character is in Nashville. But we didn't have a script or anything. We started meeting every day after that and in a week we came up with Wheeler Bryson. We came up with Kaufman, Texas, where his grandfather lives on a farm, 30 minutes outside of Dallas. We had this idea of "Where are all the old outlaw country guys? A little more weathered, later in life. They're not 20 and cute, with a big manager and a label behind them. The guys that have lived and are writing about real things." This was before Chris

Stapleton and Sturgill Simpson blew up. I was watching a lot of stuff my brother was writing, which was Blake Shelton, Luke Bryan. They're really good and the audience seems to love them, but where's the old-school guy? I told Ryan, "That would be interesting. Why the 40-year-old guy takes the 13-hour drive. Why didn't he go there before, at 20 or 30?" Then we created this whole world for him, with pain and a back story. Then I found the Wheeler voice and we brought in steel guitar and changed those demos.

"Real World (Live)" by Bruce Springsteen - This solo, piano-based rendition of a deep cut from Springsteen's *Human Touch* album comes from a more recently released live recording of "The Christic Shows" from November 1990. Held at The Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, the concerts were benefits to raise money for the Christic Institute, a public interest law firm. At the time, Springsteen had been off the road and out of the limelight for a couple of years. He had also notoriously put the E Street Band on indefinite hiatus. At the start of each show, he politely asked the audience not to clap along to the music. "This sounds a little funny, but it's been a while since I did this. So if you're moved to clap along, please don't. It's gonna mix me up!" Since 2018, I have been working my way through Springsteen's career in chronological order--using [the gorgeous vinyl box sets](#) from Columbia Records/Legacy Recordings. I'd previously spent a good amount of time getting into the first 10 years of his career, which included legendary albums like *Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ*, *Born To Run*, *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, *The River*, *Nebraska*, and *Born in the U.S.A.* But my ongoing re-listen ritual goes as follows: I start by reading Springsteen's introduction to each album and lyrics from his 1998 book [SONGS](#). It's sort of a precursor to his 2016 autobiography. Then, I listen to the record, then a tour-specific live recording from the growing catalog of offerings at <http://live.brucespringsteen.net>, then on to the next. So on and so forth. I'm currently up through 1993. When I first started getting into The Boss in 2010, I breezed through this era of his career with single, disinterested listens to albums like *Tunnel of Love* (1987), *Human Touch* (1992) and *Lucky Town* (1992). Delving in a bit deeper this time, I'm gaining a greater appreciation for what he was doing--especially since he was the age I am now when he was making that music then. This song barely registered for me on his studio album, but it grabbed me by collar and shook me awake when I heard it in this setting.

-David Ullman, January 14, 2020