

The Sound: 2018 Mix Album

“Shadow” by [Chromatics](#) - I started the year watching *Twin Peaks: The Return*. Each of the 18 episodes ends with a full musical performance in The Bang Bang Bar (or “The Roadhouse,” depending who you ask). This is one of several from the show—and its terrific soundtrack album—that stayed with me. I have yet to listen to another Chromatics song, but I really dig the clear vocals and Joy-Division-meets-New-Order musical vibe.

“Heavy Metals” by [Noah Gundersen](#) - I have a little bit of a love/hate thing with Noah Gundersen, but I *love* this song. I can’t think of another that more consistently chokes me up at the same spot. “Every empire turns to dust. Only love left in their place. Only Silence and tide break. Time upon time. Only infinite black space. Three words on the whole page: Honor Your Light.” Those lyrics repeat around the midway point of the song; and by the second time around, I cry every time. I’m not even sure why. It’s quickly become one of my favorite songs of all time.

“Roll On Slow” by [Glen Hansard](#) - The lead track from this Irish singer/songwriter’s 2018 record, *Between Two Shores*—the first of his albums I really didn’t take to. When I first started my tradition of annual mixes, a common consideration was including songs from albums I wouldn’t otherwise listen to. This falls into that category. It was actually the only tune from the new album Hansard and his touring band played when my wife and I caught them at The Palace Theater in St. Paul on St. Patrick’s Day. He’s had at least one track on all 15 of my mixes, though. I’m glad to have a place to hear this song and to keep that tradition going.

“Can’t Deny Me” by [Pearl Jam](#) - The first hints of a new PJ album—a protest song full of scathing lyrics clearly aimed at the assholes in Washington. *Tell ‘em, Ed!*

“Who I Was” by [Phil Little](#) - Phil’s been making regular appearances on my mixes since I moved to Minnesota in 2012 and met him at an area open mic. He’s 40 years older than me, but we bonded over a shared passion for writing music—though he’s far more prolific than I, especially recently. In 2018, he set a personal record for songwriting. He finished 50 original compositions! PLUS, for the second year in a row, he recorded dozens of songs with anecdotal introductions during three 3-hour studio sessions at the Hideaway in Minneapolis. It’s from his April 2nd “songs with talk” CD that I took this track. In it he sings, “I always have been who I was.” I’ve read of research studies whose findings suggest our personalities and the way we react to the world are set (barring significant trauma) by the age of seven. At least in my own case I know this to be 100% true, and this song helps me remember that can be a good thing.

“Freeing the Waters” by [Paul Hertzog](#) - A film composer best known for scoring early Jean-Claude Van Damme movies. Turns out he retired from the entertainment business in 1992, but I fell down a rabbit hole one day on his website, where he sells the music he’s released in the years since his action-flick days. On his site he mentions that this song was written just after scoring *Bloodsport* as an experiment to “see if I could make minimalism interesting.” It certainly works for me. I may or may not listen to his soundtracks to keep my spirits (and my kicks) high while doing “karate in the garage” for exercise.

"Wait For It" by Leslie Odom Jr. and the Broadway Cast of *Hamilton* - On paper, this celebrated musical didn't seem like something I'd be into. However, I knew my wife was interested, and I somehow managed to surprise her with pretty great tickets to the touring show, which came to Minneapolis this fall. I was taken aback by just how on-board I was a few numbers in. I still can't quite wrap my head around how one uber-talented dude wrote this masterpiece of a musical. From the performance we saw (with Nik Walker as Aaron Burr), this song in particular really knocked my socks off. It's still getting stuck in my head for long stretches of time. I'm a bit late to this party, as I often am. I'm just glad I didn't miss it all together.

"Dancing In The Dark / Land of Hope and Dreams" by [Bruce Springsteen](#) - We were not so lucky as to land tickets to The Boss's run on Broadway. Thankfully, the show was documented by longtime collaborator Thom Zimny and began streaming on Netflix the day after the 236-show-residency closed on December 15th. For over a year, the 69-year-old Springsteen performed this "stage adaptation" of his 2016 autobiography (*Born To Run*) five days a week at the 975-seat-Walter Kerr Theatre in New York City. The show is just Bruce, alternating between guitar and piano, relating carefully crafted monologues between solo performances of many of his most iconic songs. It is sublime, and the intro he gives to this rendition of "Dancing In The Dark" (which dovetails seamlessly into "Land of Hope and Dreams") really encapsulates why I'm so drawn to this dude and his work.

"The Sound" by [Noah Gundersen](#) - It was coming across this song that caused me to order Gundersen's 2017 album *White Noise*. He originally made a name for himself as an acoustically-based singer/songwriter-type, but this record has much more rich and experimental textures than his previous offerings. If you dig this and/or "Heavy Metals," have a listen to the whole set of songs wherever you listen to songs.

"Sky Could Undress" by [Balmorhea](#) - I have yet to really embrace the streaming platforms as the place where I most often listen to music. Nonetheless, I do sometimes go to Spotify's "[Deep Focus](#)" playlist for instrumental tracks I can have on in the background while I work. I liked this one enough to look up Balmorhea on Bandcamp and buy the *Clear Language* album on which it appears.

"No Stars" by [Rebekah Del Rio](#) - Another track from the *Twin Peaks: Music From The Limited Event Series* soundtrack album. Just a few bars into Del Rio's performance during episode 10, I was in tears. I ordered the LP immediately. It's a really great soundtrack record, especially given how prominent a role the music plays in the series.

"Over and Out" and "Ahead of Ourselves" by [Nine Inch Nails](#) - Trent Reznor and company did some really cool shit in 2018. They released *Bad Witch*, the final installment of an EP trilogy that began with 2016's *Not The Actual Events*, on June 22nd--my dad's birthday. "God Break Down the Door," the preview single in which Reznor croons in homage to the late David Bowie, was released on May 17th--both my brother and Reznor's birthday. At 53, Reznor's voice may

not be the searing scream it once was, but his intention, integrity, and artistry have only deepened over time. Tickets for the Cold And Black And Infinite tour could only be purchased in-person at the venues at a specific date and time. [The statement on nin.com](#) explains the rationale in delightful detail and offered a ticket-buying experience with “the potential to be enjoyable.” The 40 North American dates opened with the band performing the entirety of its 1992 *Broken EP* and went on to feature drastically different sets night-to-night, full of rarities and first-time performances of fan-favorites like “And All That Could Have Been,” and “The Perfect Drug.” I’ve got my fingers crossed that the closing six-night stand at the Palladium in L.A. will result in a concert film directed by Jonathan Rach (*Closure Documentary*) who was on-hand taking photos.

"A Real Indication" by [Thought Gang](#) - Once I finished *Twin Peaks: The Return*, I started back at the 1990 pilot and re-watched the whole series--including [The Missing Pieces](#)--via the magnificent 2014 BluRay boxset. Truth be told, I spent much of 2018 in *Twin Peaks*. The Entire Mystery collection also includes David Lynch’s 1992 prequel feature film, *Fire Walk With Me*. That is soundtrack album from which this song is taken. Meistro Angelo Badalamenti takes to the mic to deliver a gut-busting rendition of David Lynch’s Beat-poet lyric--literally. As I learned in Lynch’s *Room To Dream* book, which was published this year by Penguin Random House, “Angelo gave me a hernia.” In researching this paragraph, I learned the pair put out “[their wild jazz experiment](#)” in November--25 years after the original recording sessions. I’m sure to be ordering that very soon! Anyhow, I love imagining the studio scenario of Badalamenti cracking Lynch up to the point of physical harm when I listen to this.

"Toast" by [Hamell On Trial](#) - Hamell’s another “regular” on my mixes. This year, in between releases for New West Records, he unleashed a “special one-off album” on Saustex Records titled *The Night Guy at The Apocalypse: Profiles of a Rushing Midnight*. Only available on limited edition “clear crime scene clean-up” vinyl, all of the songs were recorded on Hamell’s phone in locations like an Icelandic airport, a Detroit parking lot, or (in this case) in Clive Barnes’ House in Kilkenny, Ireland. That’s Clive on slide guitar. The record also comes with a super-cool, full-sized newspaper insert written and illustrated by Hamell. The folks at Saustex describe the project as “a rambling 13 song tale full of sex, violence, substance-abuse and revenge that is centered around a fictional tavern called The Apocalypse. Not for the faint of heart this album would probably carry at least two parental advisory warnings on the cover, if we did that sort of thing.” Fans of Hamell’s cult-classic *Choochtown* will find much to love.

“Out Of Sand” by [Eddie Vedder](#) - One more from the Roadhouse... After being introduced by his birth name--Edward Louis Severson III (dig out your *Ten* liner notes, friends)--on-screen in episode 16 of *Twin Peaks* season three, Vedder sings this acoustic lament with the chorus “Now it’s gone, gone / And I am who I am / Who I was I will never be again / Running out of sand.”

-David Ullman
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