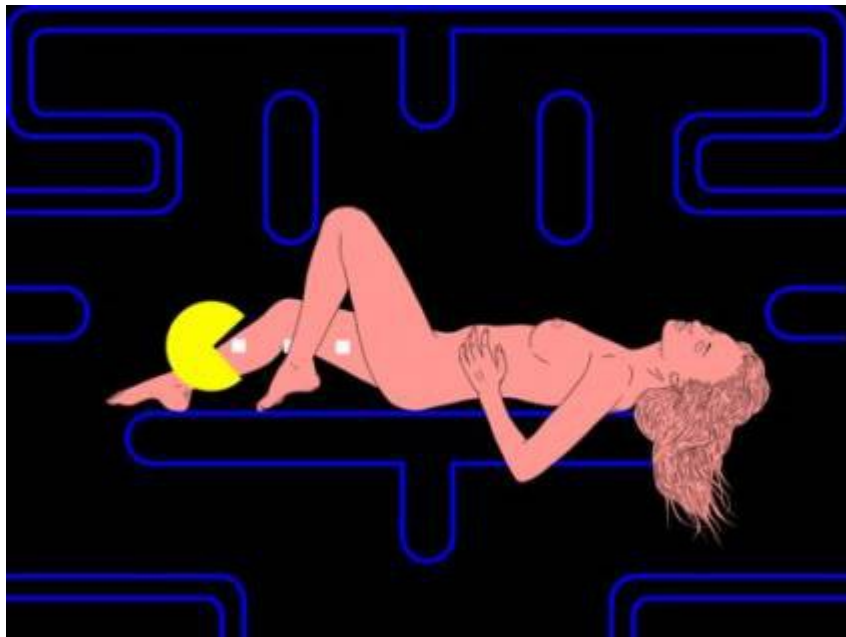


When it comes to sex in the
music of the 80s...
this issue of *Hz* is just PA♫'d,
man.



HzS  G  d

“Fighting to Stay Free”

**** (WAY MORE THAN) DOUBLE ISSUE! ****

#186...August 2014

And now, ladies and gentlemen...



A



History



Of



Sex



In



Pop



Music

...welcome to part 2 or, as we like to call it, second base.

Before we pick up where we left off, there were, as expected, glaring omissions from part 1 which several pains were diligent enough to note and point out. Here are those:

BRAND NEW KEY – Melanie (1971) On the surface, innocent as can be. For us dirty-minded kids, a Freudian ode to underage sex.

THE FIRST TIME EVER I SAW YOUR FACE – Roberta Flack (1972) Some would argue verse 3 is a sex scene all by itself.

THE ENTERTAINER – Billy Joel (1974) The verse about Billy having “laid all kinds of girls” wasn’t on the radio single, but it did play on FM.

TUSH – ZZ Top (1975) Because you couldn’t say “ass” on the radio in 1975.

SWEET EMOTION – Aerosmith (1975) Or maybe you could. Even though it was the verse just before that one that made mouths drop.

ARIEL – Dean Friedman (1977) The I.R.S. perennial would fit better in a special issue on the history of (really) lyric-driven hits, but the inclusion of the detail “She wore a peasant blouse with nothing underneath” ensures its inclusion here.

THUNDER ISLAND – Jay Ferguson (1978) And then came “In the sun with your dress undone.” Strangely enough, it played a large role in one of the biggest sexual classics on top 40 and beyond... coming up!

ONLY THE GOOD DIE YOUNG – Billy Joel (1978) “You Catholic girls start much too late.” Some stations snipped that out even though so many listeners had heard the song for close to a year on album radio (or the album itself).

CRUISIN’ – Smokey Robinson (1979) In what was a major comeback vehicle for “America’s greatest living poet” (so said Bob Dylan), he took a sharp left turn in the last verse, moving from masterful metaphor to “I could just stay there inside you.” Apparently the success of Diana Ross’ “Love Hangover” wasn’t lost on Smokey.

RAPPER’S DELIGHT – Sugarhill Gang (1979) It’s no surprise that the song that was, for so many, the introduction to rap included what may have been the first of 35 years of sexual boasts that followed (“He can’t satisfy you with his little worm/But I can bust you out with my super sperm”).

I WANNA BE YOUR LOVER – Prince (1979) Now, this was some oversight. Nasty as the song was, I don’t think many of us thought he’d become the king (ok, Prince) of nasty over the next decade.

With that out of the way, let’s move on to

The 1980s:



ANY WAY YOU WANT IT – Journey, BRASS IN POCKET (I’m Special) – The Pretenders, DON’T SAY GOODNIGHT (It’s Time for Love) – The Isley Brothers and TAKE YOUR TIME (Do It Right) – The S.O.S. Band (1980) Either *Time* or *Newsweek* ran a story that summer about mass media’s new obsession with messages about casual sex, pointing a finger at Brooke Shields’ “You want to know what comes between me and my Calvins?” commercial for Calvin Klein jeans and citing “Take Your Time” as an example of this in pop music. Whoever wrote this must have not been listening to everything else on top 40 during the first half of 1980: as disco, or dance-oriented pop, faded, so did most of the sexual content (we’d learn in later years that those two are pretty much inextricable). In fact, top 40 was in a brief phase of renewed innocence and purity, with the return of soft rock and country crossovers, even standard (or standard-like) recordings such as Sinatra’s “New York, New York” and Barry Manilow’s remake of “I Don’t Want to Walk Without You.” While the first and last songs above contained the “it” that might have made a few listeners wince back then, the second and third – neither of which probably raised an eyebrow – were genuinely sexual: Chrissy Hynde raised the bar for “I’m a woman, and I’m sexy”-themed hits, while the Isleys paved the way for bedroom R&B, which would become a genre all to itself.

INTO THE NIGHT – Benny Mardones (1980) Noteworthy as it became as big a hit at the end of the 80s as it did at the beginning, suggesting perhaps that “age is just a number” songs never go out of style (even if this has become too hot a subject for pop radio ever since). Or that this was just more acceptable at the time, especially coming after Woody Allen’s dalliance with a teenager in *Manhattan* and before Steely Dan’s “Hey Nineteen” and The Police’s “Don’t Stand So Close to Me,” both top ten.

WHIP IT – Devo (1980) Had *Time/Newsweek*’s reporter been paying attention that summer, this is the song he/she would have made an example of, even though it wouldn’t make noise at top 40 until fall. While not about S&M, the boys (smartly) shot a video where it basically was.

TURNING JAPANESE – The Vapors (1980) Masturbation and ethnic incorrectness come together on one international hit (although – surprise, surprise - not as big in the U.S.). For a week that fall it was just about back-to-back on the chart (down in the #36-38 range) with Billy Joel’s “Sometimes a Fantasy,” suggesting even he couldn’t away with a song about that subject.

SIT ON MY FACE – Monty Python (1980) Boston rocker WBCN – where it was a top ten request - could not have been the only station to have played it.

YOU SHOOK ME ALL NIGHT LONG – AC/DC (1980) It just shows you how far we’ve come. “Those American thighs” and the song’s uncompromising sexuality were too much for top 40 then (even though Rod Stewart got away with much of the same on “Hot Legs” two years earlier), yet now it’s a classic rock/hits and wedding standard. Maybe it’s meant to be a honeymoon sneak preview.

DE DO DO DO, DE DA DA DA – The Police (1980) Although “their logic ties you up and rapes you” used sex in a non-sexual context, it still broke barriers at radio (and, as it happened, became the group’s first American top ten hit).

GIRLS CAN GET IT – Dr. Hook (1980) Even with the group’s track record at top 40, this one didn’t really take, although it said what most guys were thinking.

YOU BETTER YOU BET – The Who (1981) “You welcome me with open arms and open legs.” Not a peep from anyone about this, as I

recall, even if it was just on the album version (which most stations were playing anyway).

JESSIE'S GIRL – Rick Springfield (1981) This, however, different story. Not so much the line “And she’s lovin’ him with that body, I just know it” as how he sang it. Took jealousy songs up a big notch.

I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF – Billy (Vera) and the Beaters (1981) Lots of PDs loved this and were rooting for Billy - who’d scored a few hits in the late 60s - to come back, but it didn’t make much of a dent even with its PG13-going-on-R lyrics (“They say when you make love, you like to direct”).

THE STROKE – Billy Squier (1981) Again, not about sex, but tell that to any kid chanting the chorus of this anthem from that summer.

SLOW HAND – The Pointer Sisters (1981) In which ladies room conversation went public, serving as a lesson in sexual technique to any man who’d stay tuned.

URGENT – Foreigner (1981) “I know what I need and I need it fast.” Not that controversial a recording, yet powerful in its overall suggestiveness.

TUBE SNAKE BOOGIE – ZZ Top (1981) “She won’t do it but her sister will” comes more than halfway through, but there’s your payoff.

START ME UP – The Rolling Stones (1981) A return to bad-boy form (and instant classic) for Mick et al, even if they had to steal a line (about the dead man) from a Tom Waits song (and the hook from the aforementioned “Thunder Island”) to pull it off.

MTV’s debut is worth mentioning here because although music videos had been around for years, here’s where they became a label priority seeing as there was now a place to air them 24/7. A key element of most of those early videos? That’s right, scantily-clad women. Oddly enough, they didn’t appear in the clip for “Start Me Up” but did in both of the next artist’s videos, neither of which MTV aired given the channel’s initial focus on rock and pop, but not R&B.

GIVE IT TO ME BABY and SUPER FREAK – Rick James (1981)

A one-two combination where Rick gave Mick a run for his money, starting with “Give me that stuff, that funk, that sweet, that funky stuff” and continuing with another instant classic, rivaling “Start Me Up” on the sex-o-meter (“I really love to taste her,” complete with Rick slurping), not to mention the wedding-DJ-o-meter. But neither had anything on top 40’s next big sexual moment...

PHYSICAL – Olivia Newton-John (1981) If there’s a story about when this first played in an office at MCA Records, it surely includes the question “Are you sitting down?” 40 seconds in – at “There’s nothing left to talk about unless it’s horizontally” – contemporary music as we knew it changed and never went back. Livvy went where no female pop star had gone before – taking the role of sexual aggressor, for her a giant leap considering her long-standing image as easy listening/adult contemporary queen – and was rewarded with a No. 1 single for over two months. You could say she turned into her character at the end of *Grease*, but that barely scratches the surface. The success of “Physical” not only demanded that every female pop act suddenly up her sexual quotient, it gave rise to female artists whose reason for being popular was their sexuality.

YOUNG TURKS – Rod Stewart (1981) At the same time as “Physical” came Rod’s tale of a teenage couple who left town, moved in together and, well, Patty gave birth to a ten-pound baby boy. While that broke a little ground at top 40, it’s worth noting that “Physical” was originally offered to Rod. How would the world have changed had he said yes?

CENTERFOLD – The J. Geils Band (1981) The No. 1 hit about the *Playboy* staple (I know, not that good a pun) was more sitcom than sexy, but it’s fascinating nonetheless that it took nearly 30 years from the magazine’s start to make its most famous feature acceptable content for pop music.

867-5309/JENNY – Tommy Tutone (1982) Another hit based on a sex-based cliché – the “For a good time, call...” girl – had one of the first ‘story videos’ that helped push MTV’s sexual agenda.

THE OTHER WOMAN – Ray Parker, Jr. (1982) Shortly after it hit, I saw a stand-up comic do a routine that said, essentially (because he couldn’t have used this phrase until a decade later), that Parker’s attitude about adultery (“you hit it once, then break

away clean”) would justify his wife “pulling a Bobbitt.” I didn’t get to see what that comedian did when the sort-of sequel “Bad Boy” – where Ray begged his wife for forgiveness, even if he did want the spanking that came with that just a little too much (“Break out the leather, baby!”) - came out later that year.

I KNOW WHAT BOYS LIKE – The Waitresses (1982) While girls had played the role of the tease for years, this clarified the situation in terms any boy could understand (“Zippers and buttons, fun to frustrate them”).

BODY LANGUAGE – Queen (1982) Which was a sneaky way of referring to an erection. A raunchy (for radio) answer to “Physical” which proved to be a bit ahead of its time (16 years, to be exact).

HURTS SO GOOD and **JACK AND DIANE – John Cougar (1982)**

The two hits that made him a star contained a healthy dose of sadomasochism in the former (“Sink your teeth right through my bones, baby”) and teen lust in the latter (“Dribble off those Bobbie Brooks, let me do what I please”).

NASTY GIRL – Vanity 6 (1982) Prince’s girl group project went top 10 R&B (and got minimal play at top 40) with this jam which made it pret-ty, pret-ty clear about what nasty girls want, such as a man who’ll do it even on a limousine floor. When Apollonia (who co-starred in *Purple Rain*) replaced Vanity two years later, the trio charted with the not-quite-as-nasty “Sex Shooter.”

NEVER SAY NEVER – Romeo Void (1982) “I might like you better if we slept together.” Top 40 didn’t like it better, however.

MICKEY – Toni Basil (1982) For the line “Anyway you want to do it, I’ll take it like a man.” Proving if you have a catchy song, you can sneak just about anything past a PD.

MUSCLES – Diana Ross (1982) In which Ms. Ross tried to take “Physical” literally and maybe to another level, pushing personality and age aside for a man with muscles all over his body. Didn’t really work.

SEXUAL HEALING – Marvin Gaye (1982) Here’s where the men took the “Physical “ ball and ran with it. It would be enough were it the first major hit song to use the word “sexual” in its title, but Marvin made this more – a lot more – than “Let’s Get It On, Part 2.”

Because of a Columbia Records initiative at the time, it was issued on a 45 with only one side, which I argued was because, really, nothing was worthy of being on the other side.

HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF – Duran Duran (1983) The version played now on radio is not the one that was the hit, which featured a woman's loud orgasmic cries over the elongated fade. That actually made the record hotter than the band's video for the song.



DD, 1983. Do they smell like they sound?

BILLIE JEAN – Michael Jackson (1983) Lest we need to be reminded, a song where he denied having fathered a child out of wedlock is what made him a superstar.

SEX (I'm a...) – Berlin (1983) And the bar from "Physical" was raised again, this time with both halves of a couple essentially singing a porn movie. Even during what was top 40's renaissance on FM, this proved to be too hot for most stations.

LITTLE RED CORVETTE - Prince (1983) From this point forward he was - in terms of sex on top 40 - in the driver's seat, even if most listeners may have been (and may still be) in the dark about what exactly a "little red corvette" is. That aside, as Scott Lowe reminds us, with "condoms in the glove box to an 'ass that rides like a limousine,' 30 years of pushing the envelope led here."

JUICY FRUIT – Mtume (1983) At R&B, the song of that summer: a multi-million-selling "Sexual Healing"-inspired single full of not-so-subtle metaphors (such as "I'll be your lollipop, you can lick me everywhere"). Most top 40 stations didn't give it a shot.

HOT GIRLS IN LOVE – Loverboy (1983) But this they played. Guessing those Catholic girls had come a long way since 1978 (“Too many men to please, she counts them all on her rosary”).

GIRLS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN – Cyndi Lauper (1984) Just because it inspired the parody “Boys Just Want To Have Sex.”

REBEL YELL – Billy Idol (1984) “In the midnight hour, she cried, ‘more, more, more.’” That’s basically it. Oh, and later the same year he hit with “Flesh for Fantasy.”

STRIP – Adam Ant (1984) “If I strip for you, will you strip for me?” Um, no.

ROCK YOU LIKE A HURRICANE – Scorpions (1984) It’s not as if rockers were asleep at the switch since “You Shook Me All Night Long,” but as metal started to take hold at pop radio, so did this ode to unbridled lust.

LEGS – ZZ Top (1984) Along the same lines as “Hot Girls in Love,” only a tad more graphic (“she’s got a dress slit right up to her panties”).

THE GLAMOROUS LIFE – Sheila E. (1984) It may be a story of sex losing out to love (like, say, a Lifetime movie) but the standout line is still “Boys with small talk and small minds really don’t impress me in bed.”

SHE BOP – Cyndi Lauper (1984) Apparently, girls also just want to have fun by themselves.

EROTIC CITY - Prince (1984) The f-verb-filled B side of “Let’s Go Crazy” was so catchy, and Prince was so hot after *Purple Rain*, that a censored version became a secret weapon for stations like New York’s Z100.

LIKE A VIRGIN – Madonna (1984) Although she’d already built a sex-driven image by way of her videos, “Virgin” was the first Madonna hit to bring that to the lyrics. Of course, her floor-writhing performance at the first MTV VMAs didn’t hurt.

SUGAR WALLS – Sheena Easton (1985) And then history repeated itself as Easton, like Olivia Newton-John before her, shed

her mostly-innocent pop image in favor of this Prince-penned smash that, as Lowe reminds us, was “graphic enough to help create the PMRC.”

RELAX – Frankie Goes to Hollywood (1985) A coming out party of an entirely different kind: a year after it became an international smash, PDs in America relaxed the rules and let it through. In the midst of an AIDS epidemic, it is perhaps surprising how little ambivalence there was about this record. Whether or not it’s regarded as a gay anthem, however, it has certainly become a classic hits staple.

NAUGHTY NAUGHTY – John Parr (1985) Before his big No. 1 (with “St. Elmo’s Fire”) came this one which just may have been the first top 40 hit in the U.S. the lyrics of which included the word “horny.” That word would be more prominent in a hit four years down the road, but we’ll get to that.

OBSESSION – Animotion (1985) “Who do you want me to be, to make you sleep with me?” This was the Club Med era.

I’M ON FIRE – Bruce Springsteen (1985) With *Born In The U.S.A.*, Springsteen crossed many things off his bucket list, including becoming a sex symbol. Here’s what cemented that.

MONEY FOR NOTHING – Dire Straits (1985) While the lyrics were meant to portray a working class reaction to MTV, referring to George Michael (or whoever) as a “little faggot” didn’t sit well with radio (especially following “Relax” having broken that wall). To this day, you’ll never hear that verse (which was on the 45 edit) on air.

OH SHEILA – Ready For The World (1985) This Prince clone took the formula further with an unintelligible sex-grunting midsection. And got a No. 1 song.

SAVING ALL MY LOVE FOR YOU – Whitney Houston (1985) Speaking of No. 1s, in the first of her seven straight chart-toppers, Whitney played the other woman who puts up with a cheating husband because the sex is so great. Succeeded at No. 1 by another cheating song, Stevie Wonder’s “Part Time Lover,” which in comparison (and surprisingly) brought nothing that interesting to the table.

GIRLS ARE MORE FUN – Ray Parker Jr. (1985) Another fail in the wake of “Relax.” It was just this far from being anti-gay. He should have stuck to ghosts.

SEX AS A WEAPON – Pat Benatar (1985) “A mature and un-erotic view of bedroom politics [which] probably pushed a few too many buttons.” (Lowe)

YOUR LOVE – The Outfield (1986) On first listen it sounded like a cheating song by The Police. Or “Maggie May” with a younger girlfriend thrown in to spice up the plot. Either way, the chorus “I just want to use your love tonight” added fuel to the “men are such jerks” fire that would come back and pretty much destroy men as sexual aggressors in the hits of later eras.

SLEDGEHAMMER – Peter Gabriel (1986) In which Gabriel is a train on a woman’s tracks, a plane in her blue sky, a honeybee in her fruit cage, etc. It’s like the “Land of a Thousand Dances” of sex metaphors.

WE DON’T HAVE TO TAKE OUR CLOTHES OFF – Jermaine Stewart (1986) In which boy rejects girl’s sexual advances (“I’m not a piece of meat”). May have been the first major hit where that happened.

PAPA DON’T PREACH – Madonna (1986) Madonna’s “Billie Jean.” While unplanned pregnancy had already made its way into a few pop hits by that point, the idea that she rejects her friends’ suggestion to put the baby up for adoption – and that it’s Madonna – made this a standout.

WALK THIS WAY – Run-D.M.C. featuring Aerosmith (1986) Because of the lyric change at the end of the second chorus that replaced “a kiss” with something else.

TOUCH ME (I Want Your Body) – Samantha Fox (1986) Topless model becomes provocative pop singer and scores huge international hit first time out. Early pressings of said single come in a photo sleeve that opens up much like a *Playboy* centerfold. One more thing: she wasn’t a one-hit wonder, scoring two more top 10 hits in America including “Naughty Girls (Need Love Too).”



Samantha Fox, 1986: top ten or bust. Or?

(You Gotta) FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHT (to Party!) – Beastie Boys (1987) Included the first mention of a “porno mag” in a top 10 hit. (J. Geils referred to it as the far more respectable “girlie magazine.”)

LET’S WAIT AWHILE - Janet Jackson (1987) While it didn’t mention HIV as a reason for abstinence, the level of the scare in 1987 was at such a height that the idea of one of pop’s biggest artists hitting with a song about not having sex was looked at as just as important as every song celebrating pleasure. The kicker was that Janet did want it, just not yet, as she closed with “I promise, I’ll be worth the wait.”

TALK DIRTY TO ME – Poison (1987) Another sex cliché that not only gave this hair band its first hit but was recently recycled for an even larger hit (we’ll get to that in a future *H*z).

GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS – Motley Crue (1987) In which another hair band pays tribute to their favorite strip clubs around the world (and their activities with these girls “When they’re off their feet”).

I WANT YOUR SEX – George Michael (1987) Another big moment in pop music-and-sex history. Post-Wham!, Michael wished to change his image, and boy, did he get that wish. Initially, much of radio was on the fence with it: after all, “sexy” was ok, “sexual” worked, but just plain “sex,” especially when referring to the act itself, was something else altogether. Eventually, however, most got on board, and “Sex” nearly made it to No. 1.

I NEED LOVE – LL Cool J (1987) On his breakout hit and perhaps the first ‘rap ballad,’ L wanted to “suck on your neck.” Now that I think of it, I don’t believe I’ve ever seen him during the day.

DUDE (Looks Like a Lady) – Aerosmith (1987) “Lola” revisited, although Tyler seemed a lot more interested than Davies in whatever gender he/she turned out to be.

NEED YOU TONIGHT/MEDIATE – INXS (1987) Their biggest hit ever bubbled over with sexuality (“your moves are so raw” and “there’s something about you girl that makes me sweat”). On top of which the album version’s “Mediate” – a lesson on everything that rhymes with “ate” – includes “like pretty Kate has sex ornate.”

PUSH IT – Salt-n-Pepa (1987) Breakout hit for the female rap crew taught us this dance (dance?) for “only the sexy people,” instructions for which were to “push it real good.”

FATHER FIGURE – George Michael (1988) Not as out there as “I Want Your Sex” – unless you’re referring to the video, which was way out there – but there’s a lot about being naked and being your daddy, so it probably made some listeners wince.

KISS ME DEADLY – Lita Ford (1988) When you start off with “I didn’t get laid,” you can be sure of getting everyone’s attention. Then again, many stations went with a lyrically-altered version.

DIRTY DIANA – Michael Jackson and ALPHABET STREET – Prince (1988) It’s not like there was ever any real sexual-content competition between them, but both singles hit at the same time and Prince’s wound up being far more tame: he just wanted to watch, after all, while Michael was about to become a groupie’s latest conquest. Hold on: maybe that’s what Prince was watching.

POUR SOME SUGAR ON ME – Def Leppard (1988) Scoring the big career-making hit by stealing a page from the dirty blues playbook (which we covered in part 1 of this history).

MERCEDES BOY – Pebbles (1988) In which she flipped the script on “Little Red Corvette.”

BLACK AND BLUE – Van Halen (1988) Sammy attempting to prove that VH 2.0 meant business, even in bed (“The harder the better, let’s do it ‘til we’re black and blue”). Can your band’s lead singer (or former lead singer) do this?

WILD, WILD WEST – The Escape Club (1988) By this point, the bedroom activity described in this No. 1 hit was becoming almost expected, but the group made it one for the time capsule, firmly planting it in the AIDS era, with the line “give me give me safe sex.”

WILD THING – Tone-Loc (1988) The third appearance of that song title in our history was, in this incarnation, the first major rap crossover hit, as in one step away from No. 1 (and some would argue that with its sales, it should have been). And it was about sex and nothing but sex. But that’s what happens when bodies start slappin’.

BATDANCE – Prince (1989) If only for Prince’s declaration of “I wanna bust that body” referring to the movie’s Vicky Vale, played by Kim Basinger (with whom Prince was rumored to have been involved romantically).

I’M THAT TYPE OF GUY – LL Cool J (1989) “Wild Thing” opened the door at top 40 for more sex-oriented raps, such as this one where L’s a freaky brother sneakin’ in from the rear who’ll “eat it when he won’t.”

PUT YOUR MOUTH ON ME – Eddie Murphy (1989) His biggest R&B hit, reaching No. 2, didn’t come close to repeating that feat on the pop side, although that may have been as much because it just wasn’t that strong, once you got past the eyebrow-raising title and chorus.

LOVE IN AN ELEVATOR – Aerosmith (1989) A lot of “going down” in this record, as there would be in many hits to come in the 90s.

ME SO HORNY – 2 Live Crew (1989) Any resemblance between the single and album versions of this was a complete coincidence. But just the recurring “horny” (see “Naughty Naughty,” 1985) was a big step forward for top 40.

JUST LIKE JESSE JAMES – Cher (1989) The real story was off-radio, with Cher’s butt-baring antics in the video for “If I Could Turn Back Time,” the comeback hit that preceded this. Which is not to say the lyric “Show me what that loaded gun is for” in “Jesse” still didn’t shock a few in ‘89, but Cher – along with other female acts around this time, such as Madonna and Paula Abdul – were competing in the sex sweepstakes more on MTV than on radio, even as the “have you seen that song” era was nearing its end.



Cher, 1989. Hello, sailors.

And it appears once again I’ve overstayed my welcome. Stay tuned for more fun in Part 3 next time.

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