

# ANTHEMAN<sup>1</sup>A!

# HzS G d

“Fighting to stay free”

#165...July 2012

## **And now, ladies and gentlemen...**

...I’m sitting here trying to figure out where and when the idea of the rock or pop “anthem” began.

I’m old enough to remember a time when the only song anyone referred to as an anthem was “The Star Spangled Banner.” The most recent dictionary I’ve got in book form still defines “anthem” as “A hymn of praise or loyalty.” The Free Dictionary online, however, shows these additional definitions: “A modern ballad accompanied by rock music instrumentation” and – get this – “A popular rock or pop song.” That’s like every hit ever made!

This explains why lately, the word gets used so much to describe songs that I’m wondering if it means anything anymore.

[http://www.digitaldreamdoor.com/pages/best\\_songs-anthem.html](http://www.digitaldreamdoor.com/pages/best_songs-anthem.html) lists the “100 Greatest Rock Anthems.” I had no idea there were that many. Kiss’ “Lick It Up” an anthem - really? I’m fine with Queen’s double punch of “We Will Rock You” and “We Are the Champions,” but the jury’s out, way out, on the also-ranked “Radio Ga Ga.” Like many, I feel Chuck Berry’s “Roll Over Beethoven” is a classic and deserves its behind-the-glass position in pop history, but I’d never call it an anthem (it’s on this list, too).

Perhaps there’s room for compromise. How about meeting in the middle and agreeing that in this age, an “anthem” is a song not only instantly recognized by nearly everyone in a large gathering – whether at a ball game or wedding party – but with the power to, at its first note, make everyone respond with a raised hand and a “yeaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhh!” or “wooooooooooooooooooooooh!” following by singing along with every word (or the one word, if it’s “heyyyyyyyy,” as in Gary Glitter’s “Rock and Roll Part Two”).

If you’re good with that, it’ll knock three quarters of the songs off that list, reducing most to, um, mini-anthems or sub-anthems, you make the call. What’s especially strange about the list is the absence of the two biggest modern day pop anthems: Journey’s “Don’t Stop Believin’” and The Black Eyed Peas’ “I Gotta Feeling.” Love or hate either, you have to admit they’re anthems. If you’re a long time pain, you’ll probably recognize many of these titles from “The Multi-Generational Appeal Top 40” in *Hz* #146 from August 2010. That

makes sense: to get an entire crowd on its feet, an anthem really should strike the hearts and minds of people across ages and backgrounds.



Before.



After.

What's great about anthems is I probably don't have to explain their impact in any detail; we've all seen and experienced how it works. "Star Spangled Banner" aside, my first experience with an anthem wasn't at a baseball game because it was before ball games did anything like that between pitches or innings (which should tell you how far back I go). Rather, it was at a club in New York where the playing of Don McLean's "American Pie" made the crowd get in a circle and sing every word (and, sometimes, hold hands) as if it were a religious service. Prior to that, I'd been to parties or clubs where a song showed anthem potential in a smaller gathering. Springsteen's "Born to Run" always got everyone in the room up and singing during my college years. In the early 1980s at a club near Boston's Fenway Park, I first heard a DJ lead a sparse Monday night crowd in the call-response for Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline" that everyone seems to know today. Not sure how you feel, but "Caroline" was the last song I'd have ever expected to be anthem material given its sound and structure, yet look what happened.

We are currently in an "anthem age." Recorded music has taken over the world, so wherever you go, DJs play songs to get the crowd going. That idea has spread to a virtual crowd (try posting "Born to Be Wild" on Facebook and see what happens), even to a crowd of actors: anthems have been a large part of the TV show *Glee's* success. Would the rise of "flash mobs" have happened if not for anthems?

Perhaps the most significant part of Anthemania is in the current contemporary music sweepstakes, where it seems like everyone wants to make a song that becomes an anthem. There's a good reason for that. With all the distractions out there now, it's not enough to just have a #1 song. You've got to go beyond radio, even beyond video. Event songs open doors for much wider exposure, in advertising, all over the Internet and of course in places with crowds. In 2012 we've already had at least one anthem top the pop chart – fun.'s "We Are Young" – and some would argue that the current song at the top, Carly Rae Jepsen's "Call Me Maybe" qualifies given its all-over-the-video-place status. And there are many anthem wannabes waiting in the wings.

It's possible that what now passes for human contact – texting, email, Facebook "friends" – has helped give rise to Anthemania. The less we interact with each other by true social contact or even just voice, the more we need songs to bring us together. If that's true, then we should be hearing and experiencing anthems by some definition for some time to come.

## **The Hz Line**

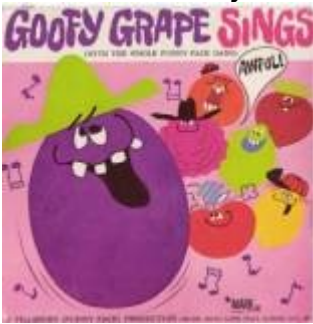
Rich, you mentioned only five new members of "Rock & Roll Heaven." In a three-month period we lost Dick Clark, Davy Jones, Bob Welch, George "Goober" Lindsey (yes, he

recorded two albums, although they weren't rock & roll), Levon Helm of The Band, Greg Ham of Men At Work, Joe Russell of the Persuasions, Adam Yauch of the Beastie Boys, Chris Ethridge of the Flying Burrito Brothers, Doug Dillard of the Dillards, Peter Jones of Crowded House, Donald "Duck" Dunn of Booker T. & the MG's, Donna Summer, Robin Gibb, Doc Watson, and Herb Green of the Platters. I'm sure that in the days before this letter sees print, we'll lose a few more.

And if your "never drink the Kool-Aid" remark was a reference to the mass suicides of Jim Jones' followers, you're perpetuating a popular misconception. They drank cyanide-laced grape-flavored Flavor Aid, not Kool-Aid.

### **Steve in El-Lay**

*Points taken, Steve. Although I focused on those artists whose passing got the most attention, you're absolutely right, and in fact, such an expansive list actually makes my argument – that we should get used to losing this many artists this often – all the stronger. Re your second observation, not sure it's so much a misconception as a cliché of convenience, since most of us grew up drinking Kool Aid and not Flavor Aid. Me, I was raised in a Funny Face family (and if that isn't a setup line, I don't know what is).*



From when I was a little goof.

### **And the hits...**

**NEWSRADIO ROCKS** In the space of five minutes the other day on WCBS-AM New York, I heard Gordon Lightfoot's "If You Could Read My Mind," Kelly Clarkson's "Stronger (What Doesn't Kill You)" and a third contemporary hit from the past decade that I can't recall. For an all-news radio station, that's not so unusual anymore. Younger listeners and increased competition have surely pushed news stations to use contemporary music to lead off stories, in these examples Lightfoot for his Songwriters Hall of Fame induction, Clarkson for some just-released scientific study on the non-killing effect of some food or drug.

I've also noticed that when anchors sign off and hand it to another newscaster, he or she often departs with a musical 'soundtrack' taking the listener up to the next feature, be it the network news or traffic-and-weather. Maybe I'm just not listening at the right times, but I haven't heard the newer FM news stations doing this as much as the long-standing AMs. While music clips on AM aren't the full songs we used to enjoy on full-service AM stations where news still ruled, it still makes me smile to hear them, and it certainly gives all news a brighter and more interesting sound than what we may be used to.

**EXTRA-HZ-ULAR ACTIVITIES** Still haven't made the jump to visual media, but if you don't mind reading or listening...

\* Check out "The CHRonicler," in Thursday's *Billboard Top 40 Update* (subscribe free at <http://www.billboard.biz/newsletters>)

\* On the radio side it's "The Rest Of The Week With Rich Appel," Saturdays 6am-1pm ET, Sundays 10am-3pm ET (listen at <http://wrnradio.com/streaming/>, sample at

<http://wrnradio.com/2012/03/watch-rich-appels-video-aircheck-video/>). Coming up on July 15<sup>th</sup>, the Top 67 of the Summer of '67. And filling in afternoons 3-7pm ET during the week of July 2-6, if you see this in time.

\* Columns weekly or close to at WOR Radio's website (<http://www.wor710.com>)

\* At Popdose (<http://popdose.com/in-defense-of-1999/>)

\* Follow me at <http://twitter.com/#!/@Restoftheweek>

\* Friend me on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/richappel7>).

So, you see, the only thing left to do is...

Click.