

It has been 50 years since the Summer of Love. Yes, 1967 it was, and what a year, especially in music. There is not enough space here to list all its significant albums, but they ran the gamut from Loretta Lynn's "Don't Come Home a Drinkin'" to Procol Harum's J.S. Bach-based "Whiter Shade of Pale." Then, of course, there was "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." Many who remember those days still hold that summer's music dear, and much of it still holds up today. In many ways it shaped us or had some kind of impact, and I am no exception.

On Aug. 5, 1967, an obscure bit of vinyl recorded at Abbey Road Studios in London was released. It has been one of the most profound influences in my life. "Piper at the Gates of Dawn" was composed by a virtually unknown band called The Pink Floyd Sound. Most of the lyrics and music were written by a 21-year-old lad named Syd Barrett.

Now I cut my teeth on AM radio country-and-western giants like Marty Robbins and Lefty Frizzell, but by 1966 there was an underground FM station, KNUS, located in the next county. Underground FM played what AM radio wouldn't for any number of reasons. Sometime during the fall of 1967, I heard the beeps and unintelligible, interstellar train-station announcement, followed by four notes of a chord change I had never heard before. It was "Astronomy Domine," a Gregorian chant-based piece and the first few lines took my breath away:

*"Lime and limpid green, a second scene  
the fight between the blue you once knew.  
Floating down, the sound resounds  
around the icy waters underground."*

In underground FM fashion the disc jockey then played the second track, "Lucifer Sam," a psychedelic James Bond-theme-sounding song about Syd's cat. The world changed in those seven-and-a-half minutes. I knew from then on that it was O.K. to see the world differently from the regimented version I was certain society was attempting to impose on me.

I call it looking at the world from the oblique. Some folks have a knack for it, but it is a learnable and a perishable skill. Loyal to the definition of oblique, it's necessary to look

## TALES FROM THE WASTELAND

# Observing the world from the oblique

*A learnable and perishable skill.*

*By Barry Perryman, Ph.D.*



*German boys were required to be dedicated Nazis and Hitler followers. What was called "The Hitler Youth" was overseen by Balder von Shirach.*

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at tasks and ideas from multiple angles. If you only have a right angle or parallel view of an object, how can you know its true nature? How can you possibly describe an elephant to someone if you have only seen it from the backside? You have to change your perspective, walk around it a couple of times. I have attempted to teach my university students this skill for nearly three decades.

And it's college students I want to focus your attention on for a bit. You are probably aware there is now a trend on campuses across the country to ban certain speakers and activities, even at the point of violence.

We would like to think university campuses are still places where broadmindedness is cultivated. Places where all kinds of people, cultures, opinions, and traditions meet to mix and amalgamate, safe havens for honoring

and practicing First Amendment freedoms.

They once were places where Renaissance- and Enlightenment-period writings were discussed, where history and philosophies were considered. Opportunities abounded to study extraordinary men and women like Cyrus the Great, C.S. Lewis, Sigmund Freud, Tz'u-hsi, Peter the Great, Descartes, Fredrick Douglass, Handsome Lake, and Thomas Jefferson. Even heinous individuals and topics were studied and objectively discussed: Adolf Hitler, Timur, Karl Marx, and the father of eugenics, Francis Galton. Few topics, if any, were consensually avoided.

Loud campus voices are now clamoring for the silencing of anyone who their self-appointed judiciary doesn't approve. Expressed in political terms, it is fascism, a forcible and dictatorial suppression of the opposition. Fascism can appear from anywhere on the political spectrum, and, for now, college campuses are a hotbed for its comforts.

If society can no longer thoughtfully and respectfully look at things from different perspectives, from the oblique, we may be witnessing the death of our collective culture. Can our best future be that the good fascists defeat the bad fascists? I think not, and I now challenge you to help young folks hear the call of reason. I am certain that Kenneth Grahame understood when he

penned the seventh chapter of "Wind in the Willows," his, Syd's, and my "Piper at the Gates of Dawn":

*"Now it passes on and I begin to lose it," Rat said presently. "O Mole! The beauty of it! The merry bubble and joy, the thin, clear, happy call of the distant piping! Such music I never dreamed of, and the call in it is stronger even than the music is sweet! Row on, Mole, row! For the music and the call must be for us." ■*

*Your Wasteland Guide is Barry Perryman, who has a Ph.D. in rangeland ecology. He is an educator, researcher, author, speaker and part-time philosopher specializing in natural resource management issues of the western states. Contact him at [bperryman1296@charter.net](mailto:bperryman1296@charter.net).*

INFOGRAPHIC BY VICTORIA PERL