



SANJOY Narayan

# Gig Season

Nothing can match attending a live concert. But the Internet offers some consolation

A FRIEND called up the other day to say he remembered me because he was in London and had just gone for a concert where Seun Kuti and his Egypt 80 band had played. "You wrote about Seun, remember? I just caught his concert and it was fabulous." I'm sure it was, I thought to myself, sitting here in the sweltering heat of Delhi where the mercury routinely hovers above the 40-degree mark during summer. The thing is summer's the season for rock and pop music concerts across the US and Europe. That's when most bands become itinerant troupes, moving from venue to venue or even playing at the mushrooming numbers of music festivals that feature exciting line-ups.

Every year, this is the time I feel more than just a twinge of despair. All my favourite bands are out on tours performing live at venues that I can't hope to travel to. Blame it, among a whole host of things, on a day job that's thousands of miles away from those venues.

I think attending live performances is the best way to enjoy bands and musicians that you love and not being able to do that is a deprivation that's hard to come to terms with.

But there's a way out. And it has to do with the Internet. Increasingly, bands are adopting the Internet to reach out to listeners, spreading their music to potential audiences – and, with some luck, future buyers of their albums – by putting their music up on the net, either for streaming or even for downloads, usually free. Some organisations, including radio stations like America's National Public Radio (NPR) help in this endeavour. On NPR's website, you can access a huge archive of concerts – some that can be downloaded, others that can be streamed.

Last week, I downloaded a full two-hour concert by Okkervil River. An indie rock band from Austin, Texas (a hot town that has thrown up many great bands), Okkervil River are what I'd call a very literate band. Frontman Will Sheff sings songs with meaningful, sometimes profound, lyrics and the sound is a blend of rock and folk. Okkervil River are over ten years and five or six full-length albums old and I'd liked one of their newer releases, *Stage Names*, when I heard it in early 2008. But when I heard them live (via the download), I was enthralled. And hooked.



AUSTIN POWER  
Okkervil River, an indie band from Austin, Texas, play a blend of rock and folk



### PLAY IT BY EAR

I downloaded an excellent recording by American indie band, Pavement (above), from Tauthal. (Below) If you haven't heard The National's album, *Boxer*, you're missing something



I've never seen one of my favourite bands, Radiohead, live and I'm not sure that I will. But I simply went to NPR's website and downloaded a full concert that they did last year while promoting their latest album, *In Rainbows*.

The NPR website ([www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org)) has live treasures that can keep your ears occupied endlessly. On May 3 this year, an AIDS benefit concert was organised in New York City, featuring artists like The National, a melodious Ohio band (if you haven't heard their album, *Boxer*; you're missing something), David Byrne, formerly of Talking Heads, Feist, Bon Iver and many others. By the end of May, the concert was up on the website – free. The list of concerts on NPR's directory is too huge to reproduce here. But if you are a fan of new music, whatever genre it is that gives you your kicks, that's a destination you cannot afford to miss.

If your tastes veer towards older bands, including ones that aren't around any more, you could also try another great website for live music. At Tauthal ([www.tauthal.com](http://www.tauthal.com)), the homepage says the site wants to "provide you with a large variety of live music for both streaming and download". The site offers gigs from a huge range of bands. It's all free but none of it is an official release – no official live or studio albums are on offer but what is there can be over-

whelming. I downloaded an excellent recording of a 1994 concert by early American indie band, Pavement, one of the first underground bands that became popular without the help of a big-label music company. Pavement began in 1989 or 1990 but broke up just ten years later (although one of its main stars, Stephen Malkmus, is still active with other projects).

On Tauthal, you can find bands as diverse as The Allman Brothers, Eels, Nirvana and Red Hot Chili Peppers. Looking for Paul Simon? There are two concerts in the Tauthal archive. Or maybe you want to check out a 1967 concert that jazz legend Miles Davis played at the Philharmonie in Berlin? Or, like me, if you sometimes yearn for retro rock of the trippy kind, check out Little Feat's 1975 concert at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta, Georgia. That's right, Lowell George was still alive and the band rocked that night. (P.S. It's also one of the concerts on Tauthal that you can not only stream but also download... for free!)

(To stream or download the music mentioned in this column, go to [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com). And send feedback to [downloadctrl@gmail.com](mailto:downloadctrl@gmail.com))

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RETRO ROCK  
Download rock band Little Feat's concerts from Tauthal

IF YOU SOMETIMES YEARN FOR RETRO ROCK, CHECK OUT LITTLE FEAT'S 1975 CONCERT IN ATLANTA