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THREE DJs I Like

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THERE AREN'T too many radio disc jockeys that I am fond of. Much of the radio music that I listen to is by way of the Internet – either streams off the web or podcasts of radio programmes from small and independent radio stations. And far too many of the DJs that I've encountered on such programmes talk way too much. Some of them hold forth patronisingly about the music they'd be much better off just announcing and playing. Others just indulge in un-witty, often downright moronic banter about nothing that matters. It's the typical have-microphone-will-talk syndrome.

Yet, some DJs really stand out. I currently have three favourites who do a few excellent shows. The first and most knowledgeable of them is Bob Boilen of America's National Public Radio and he's an exception to my general preference for DJs that don't talk too much. After running NPR's flagship news programme called *All Things Considered* for many years, Boilen now does an engaging music show called *All Songs Considered*. An eclectic show, whose podcast you can download for free, every time I listen to an episode of *All Songs Considered*, I emerge wiser and sometimes even humbled by the knowledge that I know so little really about what I always thought I knew so much about.

Besides introductions to new bands and musicians, Boilen's shows give you close-ups of other aspects of contemporary music. Recently, when Merge Records, an independent label, turned 20, Boilen had the two founders of the label on his show to talk about how Merge was the first label to have deviated from the business model of prefixed advance and royalties for artists and go for a more inclusive model where musicians and bands actually share the profits with the label. Merge has a huge range of artists on its roster: Canada's Arcade Fire is on the label, as are England's punk-rockers from the 1970s, Buzzcocks. In fact, many of the bands and artists that are doing overtime on my various playlists are Merge Records signees: Dinosaur, Jr; The Magnetic Fields, Spoon, Conor Oberst (more on him in just a little while) and M Ward (more on them in just a little while).

As well as making you emerge wiser, Boilen's shows also offer exposure to really good stuff that's playing out there. Last week, I heard a supergroup. You know supergroups – where really big, already famous musicians get together to form bands... remember Cream (Eric Clapton, Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker) or Traveling Wilburys (George Harrison, Bob Dylan, Jeff Lynne, Roy Orbison and Tom Petty) or the more recent phenomenon of Soundgarden's Chris Cornell joining force with Rage Against the Machine's former instrumentalists to form Audioslave? Well, last week I was introduced to The Monsters of Folk where three of today's



TREASURE TROVE
Every time I listen to one of DJ Bob Boilen's (above) shows, I emerge wiser. New York city DJ Timmy G's (below) weekly show is my passport to bands I've often never heard of before

KELLER WILLIAMS' TASTES ARE INFLUENCED BY THE MUSIC OF THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES

biggest folk-rockers – My Morning Jacket's Jim James, Bright Eyes' Conor Oberst and singer-songwriter, M Ward – have joined up and are likely to release a record soon. James, incidentally, has also recorded a new solo album as a tribute to George Harrison. The EP has his version of six songs, including an interesting take of *My Sweet Lord*, which you can check out on his website, www.yimjames.com.

If Boilen's seasoned observations and insights can enhance your musical experience in many new ways, Keller Williams who runs a show called *Keller's Cellar* has irreverence as his hallmark. Williams is a one-man band himself and has a

unique live-sampling act that has won many fans but his show is a treat for anyone with even a bit of inclination towards music of the Sixties and the Seventies. It's not that Williams plays only music from those phenomenal decades but that his tastes are influenced by that. On a typical *Cellar* playlist you'll get tracks that range from the lounge and trip-hop music of Thievery Corporation to the alternative metal purveyed by System of A Down. Then, when you're least expecting it, Williams will unleash Fela Kuti's *Pansa Pansa* on you and follow it up with a long jazzy improvisation by ace guitarist John Scofield and his band. The best part is Williams doesn't talk much between the tracks he plays. Just a bit after every three or four songs and lets you do much of the discovering. Find him at http://underheard.org/podcasts/Kellers_Cellar.xml.

That's also the way a young New York city DJ, Timmy G, does his show for the NYC-based East Village Radio. Timmy G's weekly show, *Fast Forward Rewind*, is my passport to bands that I've often never heard of before. The near-reticent DJ plays Brit-rock/pop, low-fi bands and post-punk gems as well as new alternative rock music. And, at the end of it all, you discover names that you suddenly believe you must check out in greater detail. I've heard bands like The Breeders, Belong, Felt and New Order for the first time on *Fast Forward Rewind*. And every now and then, when I'm feeling jaded, I go down to the show's website and catch a bit of unexpected new action. Check him out at www.eastvillageradio.com.

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