



SANJOY Narayan

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I'll Stick To New Music, Thank You

I was told to write about music young people listen to but soon found out the youth are listening to old crap

THIS COLUMN has been getting some flak. Some friends as well as complete strangers have been telling me I write about obscure music and that I have no idea what young people are listening to these days. "Go to nightclubs and pubs," advised someone, "and check out what they're all grooving to instead of pulling out funny sounding bands and getting ecstatic about them." So last weekend, post-dinner, I dragged a companion and myself to what everyone who's young and hip considers being South Delhi's best nightclub for music. When we walked in at 10.30, the place was packed as it probably is every Saturday and everyone, young men and women at the tables, some on the dance-floor, others lounging at the bar, was singing along to what was being played. It was Billy Joel's *Uptown Girl*. If I remember right, *Uptown Girl*, about a model (Christie Brinkley or Elle MacPherson, depending on who you believe) Joel was then dating, came out in 1983. "That's roughly a quarter of a century old," I hissed to my companion. She ignored me and, as we headed to the bar to order our drinks, I thought perhaps it was some woman's birthday and her boyfriend / fiancé / husband had asked for a special dedication and everyone was singing it because it was a catchy old hit that everyone knew the words of (like I do those of *Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da*, which I positively hate).

I was wrong, of course. Our drinks came. And the music changed to The Doors' *Roadhouse Blues*. Not only was everyone singing again, they were drowning out the late, old Jim's melody-free voice. And, mark this, when the verse *Well, I woke up this morning / And I got myself a beer* came along, I distinctly remember some chaps actually standing up and chanting those lines with Republic Day fervour. The Doors wrote and released *Roadhouse Blues* in 1970. "Was this a retro evening?" I asked the affable bartender. He looked perplexed. More prodding and he said they play it every evening and that everyone loves it. "Don't you?" "Er, yes," I said quickly. The music had changed. They were playing Guns N' Roses. No, it wasn't any thing from their new *Chinese Democracy* (which, incidentally, grows on you) but *Sweet Child o' Mine* (circa 1987 or 1988). "Shall we leave?" I asked my companion. The question was ignored as she'd spotted some friends who'd taken a break from singing along to exchange hugs and pleasantries. The music changed again. Oasis came on. Again, nothing from their latest, *Dig Out Your Soul* (I'd certainly give it a robust 3 out of 5) but it



INSPIRED
New York Times Magazine has called Girl Talk's music "a lawsuit waiting to happen".

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was *Some Might Say*, a huge hit but dating back to 1995. We left soon after, with me ranting in the car about how young people were listening to old crap and that although I had nothing against old hits (with the exception of The Doors, of course... and *Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da*), shouldn't people be listening to new music? Asked to shut up, I popped the new Girl Talk CD in.

Girl Talk isn't a band. It's the stage name of a 27-year-old American, Greg Gillis, who makes music while studying biomedical engineering. The unique thing is that he makes all of his music from samples of other musicians' work. So, *Play Your Part (Pt.1)* the first track on his fourth and latest album, *Feed The Animals*, is entirely made up of samples not only from people like Roy Orbison, The Spencer Davis Group, Pete Townshend, Rage Against the Machine and Sinead O' Connor, but also Aaliyah, Jay-Z, Jurassic 5 and OutKast. The entire album is like that. Avril Lavigne (yes!) gets fused in with musicians as diverse as Rod Stewart and the black humour-laden alternative rockers, Butthole Surfers; Procol Harum, Beastie Boys, Cat Stevens and Radiohead are digitally blended with 50 Cent and Kanye West - all on one song. It isn't a simple mash up melding two diverse songs into one. Girl Talk, or Gillis, uses short and completely unauthorised samples of other people's songs sequentially to create something uniquely new, very often a product that is difficult to deconstruct or recognise the samples while you listen to them. Where's that snatch from? The Band? Jimi Hendrix? The Cure? Smiths? Or even Queen? You'll be left guessing.



BUTTHOLE SURFERS ARE BLACK HUMOUR-LADEN ROCKERS

New York Times Magazine has called Girl Talk's music "a lawsuit waiting to happen". I think his is the best tribute you can think of to other musicians. Like rock music's mega stars, Radiohead, Girl Talk has a pay-what-you-can scheme where you can pick up *Feed The Animals* (aim your browser at http://74.124.198.47/illegal-art.net/_girl_talk_feed_the_animals/ to check it out). Oh, and if you opt to pay \$0.00, i.e. nothing, you just have to say why (you may not like the band; may not have the money; or may want to donate later), you still get a chance to download the album. See, that's why I like new music and new musicians. Small Spherical Things That Bounce to those hot nightspots where everyone tonight must surely be singing along to *L.A. Woman* (circa 1971). And no, Small Spherical Objects That Bounce isn't a band.

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OLD HAT
Billy Joel's *Uptown Girl* was playing at South Delhi's 'best' nightclub for music