



SANJOY Narayan

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Reader Supported

This was a great week for music. With (more than) a little help from my friends!

PHOTO: FREDRIK EGERSTRAND

WHEN I wrote a couple of months back about The Hold Steady and the lure of their frontman Craig Finn's harsh, nasal, sometimes unmelodic, but totally endearing voice, I got an email from Rachel Tanzer who used to handle their artist relations before she moved out of the US to work in India. Rachel urged me to check out Lifter Puller, a band that Finn fronted in the early 1990s before The Hold Steady was formed. I was quite inclined to do so. Ever since I heard them for the first time (*Separation Sunday* was my first album), I've tried and managed to get hold of all of The Hold Steady's albums, the four studio ones as well as live recordings, including a very satisfying EP, *Live at Lollapalooza 2006*.

Getting hold of Lifter Puller's music proved to be more difficult. Their albums are all out of print, I think, and, for a while, I had to make do with YouTube videos and snatches here and there. Then, on emusic.com, I found *Soft Rock*, a glorious compilation of 21 songs, spanning nearly 70 minutes. Bliss. If you like The Hold Steady, you'll like Lifter Puller, Rachel had written. And she was right.

Every once in a while you discover a band that you want to obsessively get everything of. The Hold Steady are like that and so are Lifter Puller. Finn's bar-soaked vocals and gritty lyrics hooked me from the first listen and I'm happy to have discovered both his bands.

But the best part of all this is how I'm getting nudged in the direction of fabulous music by readers. Like Sammy Bhattacharya who, after reading my mention of Iceland's post-rock minimalists, Sigur Ros, sent me a list (complete with links) of not one but eight Icelandic bands, including Amiina (a bit like Sigur Ros) but also Quarashi, a surprisingly good hip-hop band from Reykjavik. I sampled some Quarashi and was instantly drawn by their unique blend of rock, techno and hip-hop, deciding that I'd like to follow this band. Alas, then I learnt they disbanded in 2005. Never mind, I'm

on a mission now to get the six or seven albums that they released during their nine-year tenure. Hat-tip to Sammy! Not only for the Icelandic trope that he's pointed me towards but also the little *amuse bouche* that came the other day, an emailed mp3 of Massive Attack's *Teardrop*, only this was an acoustic cover of their original version by José González. Massive Attack is, of course, an acclaimed trip-hop band from the UK, whose music is a fusion of jazz, hip-hop and rock, but the version by González, whose parents migrated from Argentina to Sweden (he lives in Gothenburg), is truly unique. I've linked all of these, the Icelandic bands and González, in the web version of *Download Central*. So do check them out.

Last week, I got another email full of music. This time from Rupak Das, who obviously is a musician himself. Rupak sent me video links of his own band's very competent covers of a few classic songs captured and uploaded on YouTube. They performed at the Lawrence School, Sanawar, last November and their setlist included *Cocaine* (the Clapton version), Floyd's *Another Brick in the Wall* and *Time*, besides a couple of Joe Satriani numbers. I'd, however, vote for their version of Jimi Hendrix's *Voodoo Chile*. Rupak plays a mean guitar and his vocals are excellent too. Rupak's mail was minimalist (it only had the links to the videos), so I had to scour the web to learn that he's got a day job as a doctor but also has a band that does regular gigs.

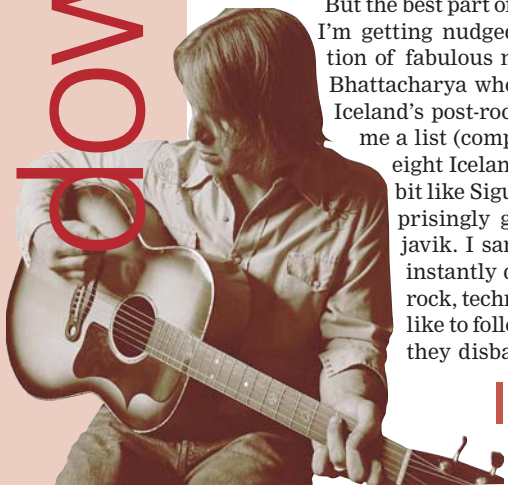
And then, also last week, there was the tip from Keller Williams' most recent podcast of his radio programme, *Keller's Cellar*. This time, he played an alternative country musician, Todd Snider. Now, I'm no great fan of country music but the track he played, *Age Like Wine*, off a 2004 album, *East Nashville Skyline*, hooked me instantly. Snider uses a guitar and harmonica, not much else, but his lyrics ooze with wry wit and candour. I found the album on emusic as well as four or five more, including the live *Near Truths* and *Hotel Rooms*, and have become a fan.

All said, it was a great week for music. With (more than) a little help from my friends!

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



SOUND OF MUSIC
Swedish singer-songwriter of Argentine descent José González (top) and Hold Steady lead vocalist Craig Finn who also fronted the band Lifter Puller in the early 1990s (above)



I'M GETTING NUDGED IN THE DIRECTION OF FABULOUS MUSIC BY READERS

LISTEN
Alternative country musician Todd Snider's lyrics ooze with wry wit and candour