

the music of fish romance

Okay, fuck, man, I admit it - when instances of soul-crushing weakness bash into my consciousness, when daggers of painful past memories slash my mind into ribbons, when I curl into the fetal position and stare glassy-eyed at the foreign reality right in front of my face but light-years away from me, that's when my hand wanders to my computer's mouse, I tap a few clicks, and on my computer screen alights some video depicting some assholes casting for fish, all in an effort to senselessly keep me somewhat grounded, to keep at least a part of my identity - that of a fish Romanticist - stable by vicariously living through someone else's film while my mind swirls in a random vortex. But nearly without exception, I always slam the computer's hinged screen shut in disgust after viewing these Internet snippets because these fuckers that plaster the cyber world with their angling adventures just bear no fucking resemblance to what I do, what I *am*. The assholes, at least those that slap together a reasonably coherent segment without astronomical amounts of camera shake, without all sounds being muffled by a blasting wind or grinding two-stroke outboard, without shitty lighting and horrendous image quality, generally come in two fecal flavors: (1) the fly-guys, decked out in all the latest overpriced Simms and Sage gear, with, of course, the stylish buff, damn near always chasing fucking brown and rainbow trout, and, of course, epitomizing the hypocritical limousine-liberal lifestyle by promoting river conservation while jet-setting all over the world chasing fucking introduced brownies and 'bows; and (2) the bass guys, the status-seeking bass guys, the suckers that sink all their money into lures most marketed by tackle companies and pro-bass fishermen, the dickless pussies that have to boat-bounce their bass to feel like men, the automatons that just have to adorn themselves in all the trendy clothing with, of course, a boutique tackle manufacturer's logo plastered all over it - the buff, the flat-brimmed cap, the laughable tackle-logo-adorned tee shirt with a design knocked-off from fucking metal-band concert shirts. And fittingly, these mainstream fuckers, one group comprised of the status-flaunting middle/upper-class big-man-on-campus white guys, the other consisting of lower/middle-class fucks who, given their somewhat lower social ranking, need even more so to display their garish, overpriced gear on their over-equipped boat, they lace their consumer-focused videos with the most vile fucking soundtracks imaginable. The wanna-be bass pros couple their deck-bouncing, jaw-leverin' offensiveness with fucking soulless nu-metal or grunge - commercialized, packaged rebellion for scared little bitches. And the fly-guys? Jesus, man, the mellowest, beat-less, sexless, most innocuous, fucking gentle-sounding fucking shitty-ass country-rock-folk pseudo-ethereal shit ever - fucking Steve Miller, the Grateful Dead, Jackson Browne, wispy country finger-pickin', *eh*.

I recall a drive into the lovely Deadfall Lakes area in northern California with some middle/upper-class white people many moons ago who likely had more stable home lives than me, whose financial worries were more along the lines of where to invest their disposable income rather than worrying if they'd have enough money to pay next month's rent, who went to yoga classes and ate leafy greens and paid attention to politics and rarely cursed. They were *nice* people, let there be no doubt, but they also weren't *my* people - they fucking might've well as been Martians to me. I'd no fucking idea on how they were able to conduct such lives. Likewise, I had no fucking idea how they could stomach, let alone enjoy, let alone *own*, a CD, a disc that never left the CD player for several hours, mind you, by some fucking motherfucker named Jack Johnson. That tuneless, feathery, thump-less, passionless music was the most pointless fucking listening experience I may have ever had outside of elevator Muzak. It was just so starched clean and gentle - I can only surmise that the reason these well-adjusted,

financially secure clowns I was with were so into it was because they were able to actualize all their aggression and hate and anger - all emotions everyone has, to varying degrees - in the board room, in the lecture hall, in the posh furniture boutique where they could exercise their elevated social class with choice purchases, leaving little room for expression of emotional contentment. They had no need for thrashing hardcore punk rock or misanthropic industrial to vicariously get their shit outta 'em. Further, that bland motherfucker Jack Johnson served as the aural backdrop and priming for hiking into and fishing a lovely little wilderness area in the Klamath Mountains. To *them*, the Johnson banality was consistent with what I'm assuming was their view of Nature: calm, gentle, ethereal, pure...real fuckin' similar to the fly-guys, which is no surprise given that the histories of the two groups ain't too different.

Well, *fuck 'em*. Fuck their white-bread fucking well-adjusted attitudes, fuck their hypocritical lifestyles, fuck their goddamn perception of Nature as some peaceful, beneficent love goddess, and, perhaps more than anything, fuck their shitty goddamn music. Look, Nature's not some soft, pacifistic bastion of innocence - anyone who holds such an ignorant view is fucking dissociated from reality, with eyes, ears, nose, mouth, mind all closed. Nature is one passionate fucking bitch - oh, sure, there are times when she's bountiful and kind and generous, but frequently she's a fucking killer, a murderer, brutal, causing war, *relishing* war, rising life up only to slam it down, cracking mountains and smothering forests, frying all life to a crisp in a raging wildfire, pitting groups of life against each other to kill and maim and connive and contrive. She's multifaceted, a sadomasochistic dominatrix on one hand and a voluptuous, pouty, sweet and sultry lover on the other.

And She's rarely, if ever, complacent like a fucking Jack Johnson song. Consequently, Nature needs an accompanying soundtrack that's a bit more resonant with her wild rages and passions, especially when a hunter hunting his prey, a primal, fucking ball-busting relationship, is the mode of human-Nature interaction.

While fishing has been the strongest, most continuous thread stringing together my fractured, misanthropic life, music's been a close second. Though cliché to state, fuck, man, music really kept me from blowing my brains out in those awful high-school years when I was a faint fucking sand grain frequently being cast ashore by the mainstream's angry waters. But it wasn't music *in general* that made me not feel totally worthless, certainly *not* self-satisfied tripe along the lines of Jack Johnson, but it was fucked-up, angry, hateful, fucking suicidally depressed, sexually heady tunes that suggested I wasn't alone. Siouxsie's baleful wail in "Rhapsody" on the *Peepshow* record. The mournful "Who Killed Mr. Moonlight?" by Bauhaus mirrored the sorrow of my own pathetic soul. Thrashings of Minor Threat and Crass and the Misfits' *Earth AD* records elicited my own rage and vicariously released the anger via pounding the fuck out of my speakers. The twisted lust of the Pixies' *Surfer Rosa* and *Come on Pilgrim* albums beat in time to my own unusual sexuality. The sum was that these alternative music forms (and though *alternative* has hipster connotations these days that make me retch, it is an appropriate descriptor) - hardcore punk rock, goth or death rock, indie rock (for lack of a better term) - provided me with a substitute twisted fucking society that I could relate to, and, as a consequence, crystallized part of my identity.

And that part of my identity was most definitely *not* mainstream - it wasn't fucking hair metal, it wasn't fucking pop-rap such as MC Hammer and BBD, it wasn't fucking toothless progressive rock the likes of R.E.M. or Jesus Jones or, God forbid, the fucking hypocrisy and sanctimony of U2. It was peripheral music, music on the edge, shit you didn't have bombed at you every time you flipped on MTV or tuned into a radio station.

After high school died its much-deserved death, my tastes still veered from those of the usual American clown. When grunge hit with Nirvana and the always-awful Pearl Jam, I was balls-deep in the hardest of hardcore punk rock - early Agnostic Front, 7 Seconds' *Committed for Life*, and DRI's first record. When the sanitized, overproduced sounds of weeny punk rock such as the Offspring and Green Day made it big, I began imbibing the unmistakably hard-assed, tough-motherfucker stomp of rockabilly. When Nine Inch Nails became all the rage, my head was being pummeled by Godflesh. By my late 20s and early 30s, when that retarded genre coined nu-metal captured the charts and the deadened hearts of clueless, mindless jocks, I was digging into the depths of my soul by exploring obscure, stripped-down country. And now? Fuck, man, I'm an anachronism when it comes to music - old swing and ancient rockabilly and slivers of simple, straight-up, fairly new country occupy the choice spot on my turntable. However, I'm so fucking out of touch with the music scene that I don't even know if the sounds that accompany and help give rhythm and structure to my daily life are also listened to by the masses - I lack even a mainstream reference point now.

And this musical thread that's wound through my life, a thread comprised of on-the-edge bands, has been paralleled by how I fucking fling a lure at fish. While bass guys lobbed endless varieties and senseless colors of lures from 15 gazillion rods and *only* while standing on the deck of their well-carpeted boat, all with the dream of hooking fucking ugly double-digit biggies, I surgically snaked my way through rock and trees and brush with two light-power rods, a few plastic worms, and a few plugs - and caught far more fish, and decent-sized fish - 2-4 pounders - than they did. While drunk dildoes plopped down lawn chairs on the most accessible plot of bare land at the local waterhole and chucked chicken livers out on fucking giant surf gear for 18-inch channel catfish, I drifted fresh shad under slip-floats with steelhead rods in boxed-in ephemeral tributaries and with senses kept sharp and attuned to the environment by not touching booze - and I caught more, and bigger, channels. While fat, lazy fucks dragged their electronic-overburdened North River to drag huge plugs on downriggers to only drag up a few two-foot lake trout with their swimbladders blasting guts out their mouths and all but dead, I wrapped myself in layers, waded out into cold, angry water in a raging storm, and caught lake trout on every other cast on crawdad-imitating tube jigs tossed on medium-power spinning gear in a mere few feet of water.

Thus a symmetry has existed between my music and my fishing, with both being askew from the mainstream. The extension of that idea is just how these two facets of experience are related. Given that both - the alternative forms of music, which tend to be more primal, and my fishing style, which also veers towards being more guttural and visceral - are more actualizations of subconscious, non-intellectual processes than writing a fucking scientific paper or teasing out musical structures of symphony music, one conclusion's that they should be collaborating simultaneously, with accompanying thrash enhancing a fish hunt. But actually, such corroboration's just not very sound - when chasing fish, all senses, including hearing, need to be tuned to the environment to pick up on slight cues that could rise exponentially the probability of hooking fish. No, music and fishing aren't collaborative, but they *are* complementary. Music evokes specific emotions and mental images, both of which prime one for a forthcoming hunt, sharpening senses, providing a paradigm in the mind very likely to match up to that found in Nature, increasing the chance of an exhilarating achievement of a fish in hand. And since fish predation occurs in such an incredible variety of weather conditions and habitat types, so too does the ideal priming music concomitantly vary.

Some songs reflect certain types of fishing so closely in my mind that they are just uncanny...and they ain't fucking Limp Bizkit banalities or goddamn Joan Baez flights of fancy. To wit:

Two Sides of Passion's Coin: Channels and "So What?"

In clear-water reservoirs during new moons from late spring to early autumn, a magical time's birthed and killed within an ephemeral two hours or so. It's an edge, these few hours, an edge between the blasting light of day and the black-hole blindness of a new-moon night. It's dusk, a time when light slowly suffocates, when all rocks and trees and animals previously revealed by the day's blazing sun slowly and inexorably haze and then fade in the dying light. And it's just when the light's about to extinguish, when discerning images more than 10, 20 feet away from you plummet, when the daytime's critters are exchanged for mysterious nocturnal animals, that the most powerful of the water's denizens of darkness causes a nuclear blast and, if you've played your cards right, buries your lighted slip float with a demonic rage - channel catfish.

It's the transition that's so tangible during these channel hunts. The warm, treacherous day giving way to the hot, sweaty, obsidian night, with several channel catfish as the finest evidence of that flow. And it's a startling flow, too, because nothing, not salmonids on spoons, not stripers on rattlebaits, not bass on buzzbaits, not squaws on jerks, not even white bass on Pointers, can reach the sheer power and violence with which a good-sized adult channel catfish will slam a shad and shred line from a reel. I've glanced away from my slip-float for a second, only to have a channel grab my bait, bury my float, and run so hard and fast in that mere second that it broke the line before I could even loosen the reel's drag. I've had channels annihilate set-rigged shad so rapidly that they backlashed my baitcasting reel, and that with the clicker on. I've had channels burn off 30 feet on line on a set-rigged rod before I could even pick the damn thing up and lay into the fish. Fucking *violent*, these amazingly powerful fish are.

Kind of like Ministry's "So What." I think I first picked up *The Mind is a Terrible Thing to Taste* during summer of '91, after the second shitty fucking year of high school thankfully extinguished, and as whatever security I felt I might get with my old man - or any other family, for that matter - continued to disintegrate. Too, the inability for me to forge any relationships with any people during that first year on the mountain further cemented my isolation, fed my frustration, my alienation, and, as a consequence, primed me for an affinity with fucking misanthropic, violent music. Ministry's record and I, shit, we fell in love in that lonely fucking summer, and no song resonated with my suicidal soul more strongly than "So What." A song about parental neglect leading to children's violence. A song bathing in the twisted joy of killing motherfuckers. A song swinging between a danceable, smooth set of verses and a raging, snare-bashing, bone-crushing chorus. A brash, nihilistically proud misanthropy. God, I remember my fucking pathetic old man picking me up from my ego-wrecking McDonald's job, me popping *Mind* into the cassette player, and forcing the old fucker to hear "So What" over and over and over again. That's likely the closest I ever came to punching the fuckface, which he kind of deserved.

Thus "So What" is the aural mirror of a dusk channel hunt. The transition from the verse to the chorus...the transition from the lazy day to the tension-saturated night. The summertime introduction to Ministry and the best season for battling a channel. The glorying in killing people in "So What" to the glory I can certainly imagine a big channel feels when it crushes a

shad. And perhaps more than anything - the vicarious release of all this fucking rage through this amazing industrial song, the elation of feeling the power of hate and anger and rage funnel through the ugly aural landscape of Ministry's making, the fucking *passion*, it's mirrored on the other end by *feeling* it when the hook point drives home in a pissed-off channel's jaw, and that same power, of rage and hate and anger that needs no words, that travels up the line, to the rod, through the aching arm and to the reeling mind, the *passion*.

The flip side, when the gorgeous, streamlined, muscle-bulging power of a tailed 10-lbs channel catfish is gently unhooked, when her strength returns after the brutal battle, when she bursts out my hand with even more piss and vinegar than before I sunk a hook into her, is that that passion, colored as hate when shunted through "So What," turns into love as the channel vanishes from view back to her blackened aquatic lair.

Daydreaming Squaws

Man, those late teenage years - what a maelstrom of emotions and experiences. Delving into booze and drugs, with the resultant drunkenness and highs - what a shift in sensations relative to all that had come before in life. The first fucks, overwhelming with just the novelty of the actualization of all this new psychological and physical machinery. The hate, the rage, the misanthropy, the nascent realization of a *difference* between mainstream society and I. And the tribe, our group - never before, and probably never again, was, and will I ever so strongly linked in such a tight human circle as that created by Rouseburger and Rob and Marcus and Cara and McMullen and Skippy and even Berg. It was the crystallization of first love and first hate.

A purity existed in all those experiences and emotions - time and the grind of life had yet to embed the intellectual ruts, the filters, by which the energy fueling those wildly alive late-teenage years were to eventually be dampened. Even the hate and rage and violence - its combined vicarious expression through music and writing, whether blasting Bad Religion's *No Control* and the Misfits' *Earth AD* records at sonic-boom volume levels or slamming in a circle pit at the local hardcore show or pounding the keyboard with my first few essays of sheer human hatred, was fucking exhilarating, fresh, pristine.

My first experience with any fish species is always searing, given its novelty, given its social meaning, given its evidence of success. Even now, at this stage of the game, I'm still overcome by wonder when I land the first of a never-before-Teejay-caught species - my first king and first white sturg of last year left me woozy, delirious, elated. But the euphoria is damn near always greatest with either rough fish or less popular sport fish - my first real Sacramento sucker, my first pink salmon, my first real carp, they all left me damn near breathless. And of them all, of all those generally loathed but absolutely priceless trash fish, none stunned me more when I first experienced 'em than Sacramento squawfish.

The irony - the first time I felt the surge of power of a big squaw on the line - this was when I was 20 years old - I didn't catch one. I was somewhere in the Yuba River drainage with Cara and Rob, some spot that Cara knew about and that now, 20 years later, I've been unable to relocate. She dragged us down there - it was about a 30-minute hike to the river through private, posted land - mainly to just hang by the river, to swim, to cliff-jump, to talk shit. Of course, I brought a rod, and I charged off on my own with a small spinner after we had our fill of jumpin' and dunkin'. Little annoying smallmouth, fucking elementary-school six-to-eight inchers, immediately jumped on my spinner with nearly every cast. I continually moved downstream in search of larger fish, and, fuck me, when I rolled into this big, deep pool with a chute of bubbly

water at its head, I found 'em - but they weren't of the spiny-finned variety. No, these were torpedo-shaped, metallic, two-and-a-half-foot-long squaws, native squaws, that grabbed onto the pesky baby smallies stuck to my spinner's treble hooks and gave me damn near a heart attack in the process. With an ultralight stick and tiny trout lures, not only did I lack the ability to tempt one of those big ol' minnows with an appropriately sized lure, but I certainly didn't have enough beef in the stick to corral and bring to heel one of those beasts. So the closest I got to holding one of those missiles was when one of 'em grabbed my smallie and would not give it up for several seconds, after which she spit the smallie and left two scale-less arcs about mid-body on the little bass.

Roughly concurrent with that dazzling experience on the Yuba, certainly present through much of my late high-school years and thus part of the coalescing of my identity, was the emanation from my speakers of Ride, who, along with My Bloody Valentine, was the vanguard of the shoegazing scene. Ride recorded two records I've dug - *Smile* and *Nowhere*. Their third record I remember eagerly awaiting to only be resolutely disappointed - the pedestrian *Going Blank Again* was just fucking weak college rock aiming for bigger audiences, bigger bucks, and hence definitely not people such as I. But those first two records - man, the music. The drumming is dense, busy, beautiful, really. The wall of melodic noise created by the two guitars is really enveloping, especially on the song "Like a Daydream." And, given that the main songwriters were the same age as I was when I experienced my first squaw, the lyrics are frequently fucking awful - juvenile portraits of hungover romance using cliché imagery of cars and chains and certainly a limited vocabulary. But given their age, kind of as it's supposed to be - wild, irrational, and unlearned.

Pristine.

And goddamn if "Like a Daydream" doesn't inspire sleek, silvery squaws in my mind, although it wasn't until banging out this article that the reason for the link broached my consciousness: purity. While squaws can still be found throughout the Sacramento-San Joaquin Watershed, they're by far most abundant in undisturbed, relatively cool rivers that, compared to the lower American and lower Feather and Sac rivers still open to anadromous fish, bear far more resemblance to what this drainage looked like before humans dammed and diked and diverted it. Where big squaws, and, not surprisingly, their more sensitive relative hardhead, rule the roost are not easily accessible, such as that reach of the Yuba that I still can't find, and thus the evidence of humanity is less evident. The *real* squaw rivers are more wild, man, just like the youthful jams of Ride. And while Ride's lyrics are frequently adolescent portraits of love, the subject matter just resonates with the romance exchanged between me, some fucking off-his-rocker old punk rocker, and the squaws, the beautiful beasts still finning in the purest of our remaining rivers.

It's a surreal, sweet reverberation among the squaws, their glistening waters and lush foliage, and I - like a daydream.

Goldens and Two Bouts of Black

Ed Abbey writes in *Desert Solitaire* that some *thing*, some essence, in the desert draws him, he feels some innate synergy with the stark openness of the desert. I feel a gravitation to a landscape, too, one that ol' Ed opined as being a more commonly sought vista: mountains. While I also host a fondness for bleak and desolate landscapes such as Panamint Valley or the Arizona deserts, such environments are likely permanently tarnished in my mind given the fusion of the

Mojave Desert with the suburban blandness and hideousness of Lancaster in my early years. But my ideal, the vacuum force of mountains for me is probably a bit different than for others, and no doubt fired by nostalgia for Arrowhead - rather than the stately, forbidding granite spires drooled over by mountaineers, I feel most realized in the more lush, verdant mixed-coniferous forests of, for example, the Sierra Nevada's mid-elevations. Nevertheless, *all* mountains cause me to crane my neck: I remember daydreaming about climbing the hardwood-shrouded mountains around Cuyamaca Reservoir; I felt home in the pinyon-pine-peppered Panamint Mountains; traipsing along trails among oaks and digger pines and a dying sun in Pope Canyon strummed my soul; and, yeah, a resonance bounced back and forth between the alpine Sierra Nevada and I.

And, of course, the main piscine prey housed in those mountains' waters is salmonids. In the case of the Sierra Nevada, the crown jewel is the most jeweled, the most gilded - golden trout. In my early 20s, above the tree line, with the towering peak of Conness supervising the little life progressing and evolving below her baleful stare, I held my first-ever golden in hand, a little five-incher that chewed a small hare's ear nymph in Hidden Lake. The air was ancient, pure, gaseous crystal. The pristine water felt out of time, out of place, anachronistic, transported from the Permian to the Holocene. The stunted pines and boggy meadows and leering glaciers and paradoxically warm summer breeze bequeathed an airiness, a lightness to the landscape, the *feel* of the place. It was otherworldly.

Twenty years later, and those emotions, that setting, that fish, they haunt me. I've caught a lot of fucking fishes since then, in myriad waters, in myriad conditions, with endless lure combinations and states of minds and swelling and ebbing of atavistic power. Given the repetition of such interactions, such relationships, the fires between many fishes and I have faded - black bass and I, for example, know each other too intimately and are now like bitter old octogenarians hitched at the hip. But goldens, golden trout, and the remarkable world they eke out a living in, still enthrall me, especially now since my relationship with Nature has matured and diversified - not only do I want to hold her cold-blooded aquatic citizens in hand, but I want to feel my muscles burn when climbing Her ridges, I want my eyes blazed by the brilliant light glancing off high-elevation wildflowers, I yearn for the icicle wind biting my face when I cuddle up in my layered clothing and bag and miniscule tent as a storm rages. A goldie hunt is one that really gets my juices flowing, man.

And a guy named Frank Black, AKA Charles Thompson, and his song "Old Black Dawning" always sears into my mind an alpine lake and a fat golden trout. Similar to "So What" and channels being temporally tied by experiencing both predominantly in summer, so, too, is the link between goldies and "Old Black Dawning": I purchased Frank Black's eponymous album around the time I rolled up to the Twenty Lakes Basin and held my first goldie. But, of course, it's more than that. Some congruence exists between the song and the high Sierra. "Old Black Dawning" is kind of about Biosphere 2, where oxygen levels got down to about the point they hover at on a normal high Sierra day; the Tower of Babel's some altitude, similar to the Sierra; and Frank sings of the transitory time in Tuscon, similar to what a human's restricted to in the high Sierra given the gnarly weather from late autumn through spring. Nevertheless, when the song and the alpine granite mated in my mind, I didn't give a fuck about the lyrics - it was the *sound* that just matched the spiky landscape. The thick rhythmic acoustic guitar; the sparse, surf-inflected leads; the uncommon three-measures-per-phrase verse; and the frequency of minor chords in a major-key song just fit the world of golden trout - otherworldly.

When I get back to the goldies, you can bet your fucking ass the last note I'll hear before hoofing it onto the trail will be that big, final E chord at the end of "OBD."

Of Lakers and Love and Dreams

From the mid-90s to the mid-2000s, a sparser, more atmospheric, more intimate musical style ate up a larger proportion of the alt-music scene. Some coined the music type as post-rock, which encompassed bands such as Mogwai and Califone. To me, Morphine, though considered a *low-rock* band, elicited the same emotions as the post-rockers if just with more standard song structures and more prominent vocals. Of course, consistent with me just being offset from mainstream society, or, Hell, even *non-mainstream* societies, I didn't imbibe these more somber, more introspective bands until the late 2000s, mainly because I was only introduced to 'em by an ex-girlfriend well after their popularity peaks.

One post-rock, sullen, somber band I always hated was Arab Strap, which was just another item in the litany my ex-girlfriend and I could argue about (hence the *ex-*) since she loved 'em. Arab Strap, though fucking depressed and drunk and sparse, are just too fucking dragging for me to resonate with - they really just lumber along without any threatening edge, a spikiness I seem to require in my music. Morphine, in contrast, in such songs as "Mary Won't You Call My Name" and "Hanging on a Curtain," have some bite to 'em despite also being depressed and bummed out...I mean, their fucking *name* is *Morphine*.

But one Arab Strap song, man, the fucker just throbs my soul at the dead-set perfect frequency: "Dream Sequence." Simple minor-key progressions, halfway-decent lyrics, a repeated piano motif, and a little bit of speed, and it just *fits*. Maybe it's because Arab Strap hailed from the cool, moist, somber climes of Scotland; maybe because the song's lyrics play with dream themes, and dreams occur while sleeping, and most sleeping happens under covers to shield cool night air; or maybe it's because the song's echo-enshrouded ending sounds like being enveloped by a blizzard before freezing to death; regardless, "Dream Sequence" has always sounded *cold* to me, but it's been a comforting cold.

Like shallow-water lake trout.

As far as salmonids go, I've always found the most popular species to be the least alluring to me. In the anadromous realm, silver salmon and springers commanded less desire than lowly chums and pinks. On cold-water rivers, rather than joining with masses in venerating wild 'bows as the ultimate game fish, I opted for and felt more enthralled by the glittering mountain whitefish. And in frigid, austere lakes, it wasn't big, steely 'bows or haughty browns that tugged my soul but lake trout, mackinaw, those denizens of the very deep.

Well, *supposedly* very deep. Fascinated by lakers and always wanting to hold one, I was dejected by the fisherman literature that stated you could only catch 'em down-rigging giant minnow-shaped plugs abyss deep from a big boat - all features of fishing that just didn't jive with my minimalist philosophy. However, I was suspicious of the fishing lit for several reasons: (1) most production in lake-trout-housing lakes occurs in the littoral zone (read: shallow); (2) fishermen are, in my experience, some of the dumbest, most illogical morons on the face of this here Earth; and (3) that lakers only inhabited deep water and inhaled eight-inch fish was not backed up in scientific literature. Instead, the average adult lake trout, a fish running around four pounds or so, was pretty damn shallow from autumn through spring and primarily ate benthic critters such as crawdads, sculpins, and suckers, whether in Flaming Gorge or Fallen Leaf or Lake Tahoe. Combined with the lake-trout preference for low-light conditions, it seemed highly probable that on overcast and/or windy days when the water was comparatively cold, I could

catch lakers from shore near complex littoral habitats with benthic-organism-imitating lures (*e.g.*, tube jigs).

And I did, so much so, so well, so frequently, and in such abundance that, in 2014, I considered my California lake-trout career complete and took 'em off the glory list.

Those truly epic laker days were some of the hardest still-water endeavors I've ever undertaken. Freezing-cold water, two-foot swells, all stinging through myriad clothing layers and waders, bashing 30-MPH winds, horizontal rain and sleet and snow obscuring vision, and the novelty of inshore lake trout slamming spoons and slurping lures in water frequently only a foot deeper or two than that in which I was wading. It was fucking *cold*, a thick cold, from the cold water that compressed my waders to the heavy snow I trudged through to the lake - *cold*. But a warmth, a fire, a glowing comfort prohibited the polar rage from icing me all the way into my soul - a fire ignited by catching damn near limitless, gorgeous, elegantly emerald mackinaw, with fins tinged fire-orange, totally contradictory to everything the idiot fishermen thought was required to tangle with a laker. That, that giant fuck-you represented by a supposed denizen of the deep in my hand in two feet of water garnered from a dude in waders casting from shore, that was the covers shielding the cold air, the cold water.

And that's why the paradoxically cold warmth of "Dream Sequence" always elicits the images of the freezing heat of catching lake trout from shore.

The Remainder

Y'know, I could write damn near endlessly about other songs and episodes of fish romance that are two sides of the same coin, where both are comprised of the same hues, tones, temperatures, volumes, but I won't - I don't need to. The point is that the primer, the ritual, the Pavlovian preparation for chasing a fish the *Teejay* way - just like "Here Comes the Bride" draws all eyes on the whore in the white dress, just as the rooty-toot-toot of martial music fires the boys up for a battlefield bloodbath, just as the organ-grinding in Christ's churches readies the congregation for a touch of God - is music. The novelty, the blessing, is that I've still so many fish and waterways and trees and rocks and crazy fucking human-empty places to actualize my twisted art, and perfect, twisted songs exist somewhere to complement and complete and nurture the experience, aside from integrating these two parallel lines of my life.

And those tunes ain't played by you, Jack Johnson - fuck you.