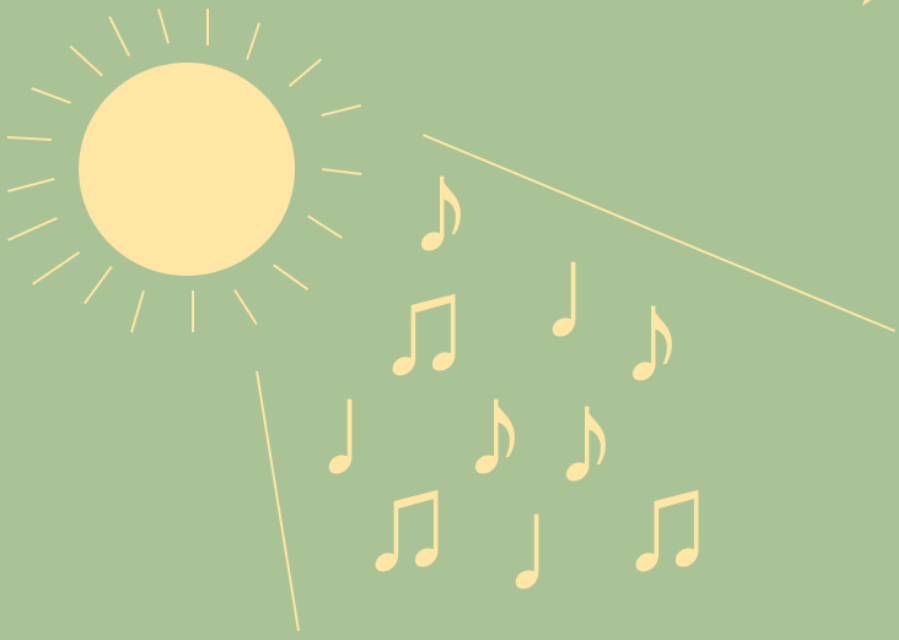
btwn the beats



issue 1:
summer serenades

Contents

Music makes us smile. *Btwn the Beats* literary magazine is a journal that champions not only music, but also, writing. We create a community for musicians, music-lovers, and writers alike to express their emotions through their pieces. Music influences all kinds of art, especially writing. We celebrate music from all genres, about all things-as long as there is a love for music behind it.

"Character is Priceless": an interview with rosegold.

Victoria "Flip" Filippo

Kyle Sean Thompson, AKA, rosegold, kyletpoetry, or kitTV, is a master of many trades. He streams, he sings, he's a barista, he plays guitar (and bass!), a teacher, and a lifelong learner. When I first met Kyle, it was during our shared shift at Starbucks where we immediately bonded over philosophy and nerd culture. While Kyle has always been a musician, I have watched him transform immsenely, into a musician, and now, a magician.

I watched Kyle play a show at the Baby G back in December. It was just him on stage with some purple lighting, a santa hat, and his guitar. I remember watching him and thinking to myself that this is someone who genuinely loves their art so much; this is someone who wants to express their raw emotions in a fun and cathartic way. watching him up on that stage singing about heartbreak and death in a pop-punk voice has stayed in my mind for a while. Kyle (as rosegold) opened for two bands, Brocoy, Stockholm Siesta, and New Design all bands which he has found community with. I got the chance to chat with Kyle about his craft recently over text, and what I got out of our conversation, I will cherish forever.

Victoria Filippo: What inspires your creative work the most? How does it keep you motivated?

Kyle Thomspon/rosegold: Life. Wouldn't that be the easiest answer? While simple, it is undeniably true. All branches of

the tree tell a story. They wind and twist downwards to the core and roots below, for time spent away from the page is just as important as the art itself. What comes first? The life lived or the art within it? Due to the tug and pull nature of the future things we create, it's a very good question to explore.

If I had to choose a single medium above all that immediately takes me to a world of deep and threaded emotion... it's music. Hands down. I love it all... books, film, painting, photography... music easily resonates the deepest.

It adds to my flame. The flame of the creator within. Like I said earlier, pausing is so important to the process and you have to live other aspects of life beyond being the creator. As soon as that spark returns, it's like a golden light of purpose, calling me to honor those who inspire me and to pass that torch to future generations of creators.

VF: What does your creative process look like?

KT: It changes shape. My process is as complex as the lives we live. Interest in disciplines cycle like the season. Poetry has it's time in the sun, until it gives way to the sonic impression music leaves behind, yet it's never fully gone, for skills learned elsewhere flow into every present moment.
That's how we are able to build off our predecessors, and one of those primary people is yourself. Overcoming who you were before is the only way we emerge from cocoons. This cycle persists. There is

no limit to transformation, especially if the mind, body and soul are willing to carve those futures.

With music, there are several ways I begin and none of them are better than the other. They all match whatever order is needed for the song to exist fully. I've written hundreds of songs, many you will never hear. I've found that a song can begin at any point in the timeline. Chorus. Verse. Lyrics first, then the song forms. An off the cuff melody with no words until the core of the song is finished. It can go in any direction and I love that fluidity. It takes the pressure off of perfection or having everything all at once.

I've written songs in half hour. I've finished songs that began years ago that return with new meaning. When I was younger and didn't have the skills yet, I would write in my diary. All the songs I couldn't sing. Never knowing if I could. All parts in my head yet too young in my craft to create it.

It's nice to remember.

VF: your writing process is very spiritual and cathartic. Would you say all of your songs have this theme?

KT: All songs? Absolutely not. There are songs I write that are full of humor, the freestyles that occur between friends around a campfire (even when there isn't a campfire.) Those songs aren't spiritual, yet you could argue they are.

All colors deserve their time in the light, so to joke and be playful is part of it too.
My solo work and poetry tend to circle these themes but they are not limited to it. It simply means a lot to me so it's natural it's threaded through most of what I create.

VF: how has this helped your personal transformation journey?

KT: As for how it's helped my healing journey... in some ways it can be the barrier that prevents me from healing. While it's cathartic to write of love lost, a relative missed, all of that, it can also be a wound that never closes.

There's also something to be said of being the artist who shares their work. That can be a strange path, for that invites the eyes of others. It's one thing if your audience is anonymous but when they are your family and friends... some poems create ripples of confusion, especially when they are unable to divide the art from the artist.

I only say this because this part of creation is so important, otherwise, if not prepared, it can invite a world of hurt because who doesn't care about what others think of them? That care ebbs and flows but we all have it.

Besides that, art is obviously very healing, it's why I refuse to let it go, even when other avenues are provide more financial support.

Character is priceless.

Cultivating it goes beyond any human goal of acquiring material things.

VF: In the same vein of separating the art from the artist and character, you go by many personas. Kyletpoetry, rosegold, Sean (lol), kittv...would you say each of one version of you is more "truthful" than the other?

KT: All personas have a seat at the table.

No voice lives without the other, even though they live wildly independent paths, they all come from the same source.

There were certainly times in my life where I'd say one dominates the other and I have preferences for sure... it all depends on how the wind blows.

On that day. In that moment. I believe we all deserve that level of depth and self acceptance.

VF: And I know you're working with some buddies right now in a band. Do you think music and community intertwined?

KT: Music doesn't live without community! We are always carrying the torch of those who came before, for they lit the way and inspire us to create.

Is isolation important? Absolutely. Time spent alone is where the magic really begins. Even boredom is a gift for from there, there's potential for a deep creative spark.

The ideal reality is one where all are in harmony with their pocket communities. It's a natural network for inspiration, being challenged, even disheartened, only to then rise above who you were before as an artist, human being... everything.

VF: what's one thing you'd say to someone pursuing music?

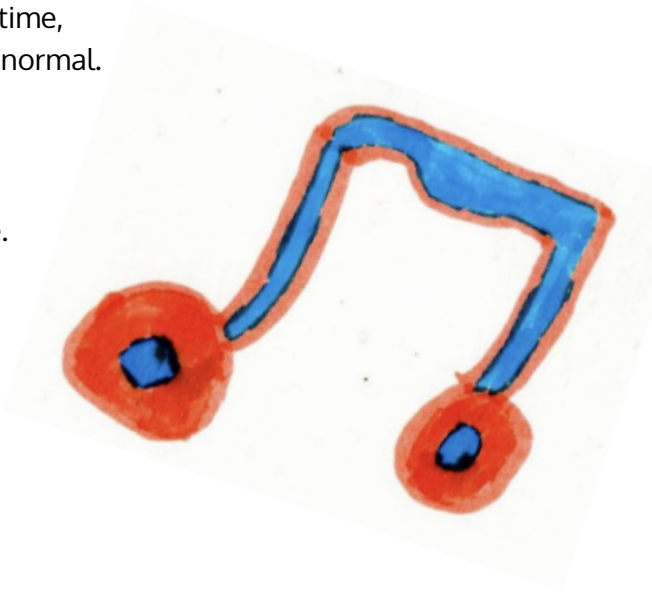
KT: Enjoy the journey. There will be endless twists and turns, where inner change is inevitable. I wouldn't have it any other way, and you shouldn't either.

On J. Cole's 2014 Forest Hills Drive

David Di Pratola

I Ain't Never did this Before

The first time
Is it always special?
Does it always serve as a pleasantry?
Pleasant memory,
Drilled in the mind,
The young,
The old,
None should be ashamed.
To admit they had their first time,
At an age older than normal.
What is normal?
I say they're abnormal,
It's fine,
It's admirable.



Embrace yourself

You don't need to lie,
There's no need to pretend.

If a pretty man or women,
Want to be something more than friends.

To engage in relations,
Dance of the birds and the bees

Allow yourself to be free,
Don't pretend you know the dance well.

It’s significance,
Meaning,
Trance,
And spells.

Embrace who you are,
Be proud of thee.
If they can't accept that,
It wasn’t meant to be.

Who Do I Look Up to?

Not one,
Not a single one.

A role model?
None?

To teach me to drive,
Help me strive.

Support me at my lowest,
Advise my choices.

Lift you up higher,
Stress is getting tighter.

The load does not get lighter.

Who will teach you how to shave,
What does it mean to behave?

Be a part of society,
Treat a woman with respect.

Who will you look up to?

Not all that glitters is gold

Of course a young one will aspire.

To what society deems a hard "Gangster".

The cars,
The money,
The women.

The dream is destructive,
Interruptive.

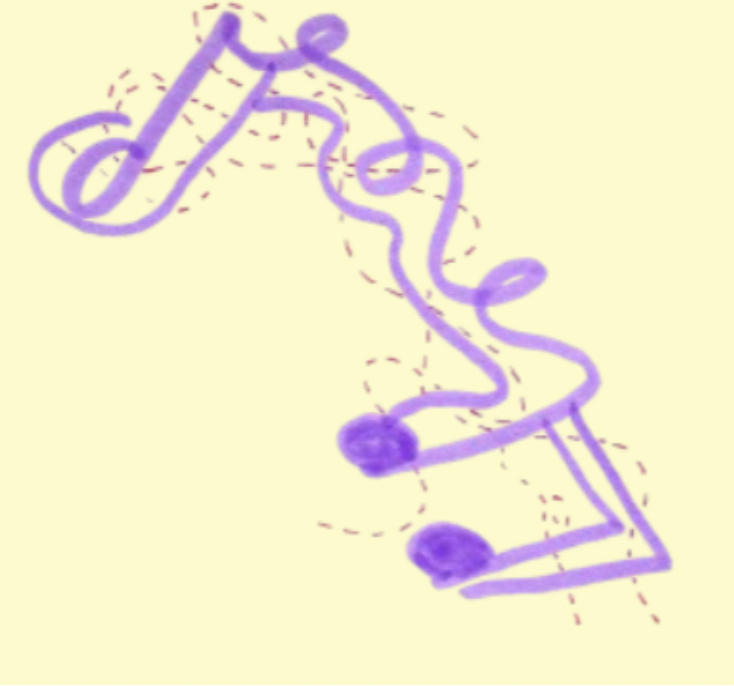
Instead of young intellectuals,
It breeds criminals.

Tainted youth,
Looking for fame,
In the ugly face of violence.

Stealing,
Killing.

A gunfight so heinous,
A crime so senseless,

A cycle most nefarious.



Songs For The Soundtrack of My Life

Talia D'intino

Whenever I have to do a mundane task like grocery shop or clean my bathroom, I play music as if I'm in a movie. Like it's a montage, and I'm the young college girl who's about to go on a crazy adventure, but right now, I'm picking out the finest bell peppers I can find to a pop song. Or maybe I'm scrubbing my bathroom floors to an upbeat indie song for a little motivation. I could even be on an angry jog listening to rock. The opportunities are endless and way too much fun.

It's only natural I think about what songs I would play if I were to make a soundtrack for my life. It's the same reason I always ask people what they listen to and why; our taste can reveal a lot more about ourselves than we realize. One of the best parts about going to a concert is coming together to celebrate an artist that you hold so dear, and knowing that's exactly how everyone else feels.

Now, to begin my selections as to what I would pick for the soundtrack of my life right now, I'm going to start off with:

1. Slow Burn - Kacey Musgraves: Something slow and sweet to begin. This soft, beautiful country song has been one of my favourites since the day I heard it, which was about 5 years ago.

Favourite lyric: "Old soul, waitin' my turn / I know a few things but I still got a lot to learn".

2. Dreams - Fleetwood Mac: One of the best songs off one of the best albums. This funky, folky rock tune has long lived in my heart, as does Stevie Nicks.

Favourite lyric: "But listen carefully to the sound / of your loneliness / like a heartbeat drives you mad".

3. Picturing Love - July Talk: I've seen July Talk 6 times live, that's how much I love them. I skipped my grade 10 semi-formal to see them which I was scared I would regret, and it was the opposite. Some of the best stage chemistry I've seen.

Favourite lyric: "I undress in seven steps / Like your camera's watching me / I suppose I'll strike a pose / But that's so predictable".

4. Paper Girl - July Talk: Yes, two songs in a row. They're just that good. This one in particular reminds me of being a teenager and summer.

Favourite lyric: "Well it must be hard / To be a pretty girl / Yea, it must be hard / To watch your body growing old".

5. The Morning - The Weeknd: I adore the guitar in this, and hearing it live was a dream. His voice was just as stunning. A calm, seductive, r&b classic.

Favourite lyric: "Her love is too damn foreign".

6. Pyramids - Frank Ocean: 9 minutes of pure and utter perfection. I will never forgive my brother for seeing this song live without me. Its groovy, it's funky, it's smooth as hell.

Favourite lyric: "Wake up to your girl / For now, let's call her Cleopatra".

7. Love Galore - SZA: This song reminds me of my best friend and us screaming it in her van in the summer of 2018. One of my favourite memories.
Favourite lyric: “We get so lonely we pretend that this works”.
8. How to disappear - Lana Del Rey: I’ve never heard a song sound so soothing and soft. It’s like a lullaby and has beautiful lyrics to go alone with it.
Favourite lyric: “I watched the guys getting high as they fight / For the things that they hold dear / To forget the things they fear”.
9. Garden Song - Phoebe Bridgers: Lyrically, this song is one I relate to very closely. On top of that, it’s a gorgeous tune, and I’m a huge fan of the way Phoebe writes.
Favourite lyric: “No, I’m not afraid of hard work / I get everything I want”.
10. Not Strong Enough - boygenius: My favourite supergroup around, this trio makes the best kind of sad music; some are slightly more upbeat, others are totally heartwrenching. Either way, they created this song which is one I will adore for many years to come.
Favourite lyric: “There’s something in the static / I think I’ve been having revelations”.
11. After Midnight - Chappell Roan: A huge part of my current pop girly summer, this fun pop ballad keeps me dancing (and running, it's a great workout song).
Favourite lyric: “I love a little drama, let’s start a bar fight”.
12. Ribs - Lorde: Another tune that reminds me of my best friend but also being a teenager. A very nostalgic song that I cannot believe was written by a 16-year-old. Amazing.

Favourite lyric: "Mom and let me stay home / It drives you crazy getting old".

13. Rose-Colored Boy - Paramore: A song I relate to very much. I'm not a pessimist, but as Hayley Williams says, just let me cry a little bit longer. Also, a super fun song to hear live.
Favourite lyric: "And oh, I'm so annoyed / 'Cause I just killed off what was left of / The optimist in me".

14. Heaven Is - Kacey Musgraves: A second Kacey song! This one reminds me of my partner and just makes me feel all warm and fuzzy. I'm a hopeless romantic, can you blame me?
Favourite lyric: "The way you sound when you call my name / That's what heaven is".

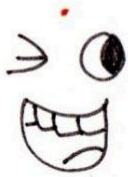
15. Alive! - Bakar: Another song that just makes me happy. It's an upbeat indie tune that makes you wanna dance and bask in the sunshine.
Favourite lyric: "I know the sunshine isn't promised so I put it in my pocket".

16. Cool Cat - Queen: Freddie Mercury: my muse. I love the smooth bass as well as the guitar, and paired with the angelic vocals of Mr. Mercury, this song makes anyone feel like the coolest kid on the block.
Favourite lyric: "Ooh, you're alright / Hanging out and stealing all the limelight".

17. Eternal Summer - The Strokes: This song reminds me of my friends and biking through Niagara-on-the-Lake during our summers. We'd ride around with a speaker and watch the sunset together.
Favourite lyric: "Hercules, your silence is no longer needed".

And there you have it, songs that I would happily choose for a soundtrack of my life. Of course this will rapidly change as I discover new songs, but I believe we're off to a good start.

Feel free to let us know what your choices would be on our website btwnthebeats.ca!



oysters and pink cranberry juice (or how to attend a concert alone)

Sophia Eleni

it starts with half a dozen shucked oysters on ice,
a double martini mixed with pink cranberry juice,
and a twenty-something in a new paycheck slip dress at the barflicking through photos of her girlfriend with whom she's gone long distance for the summer.
her chest aches, soothed by the ice cold vodka and seafood.

on Sunday she flew back from visiting her love's (and Prince Edward's) Island
on Monday she mourned, unbeknownst that
on Wednesday she'd buy a ticket to a
Budweiser Gardens double headliner
on Friday to see Mother Mother and Cavetown.
her eighteen year old self— still writing a love interest for her protagonist inspired by *Boys Will Be Bugs*, still hoping someone will look at her and think she's pretty like the lyrics of *Juliet*, still burning scraps of paper with boys' and old friends' names on them to *Burning Pile*—
hugs her shoulder. *you need this night. and so do i.*

the busboys shucking molluscs steal glances
of her melancholy de rigueur while they can.
she chose a waterfront bar for the view

but rain plummets from the sky like her tears on Sunday and now
she's an unwilling view herself.
the bartender scolds them, tells them to get back to work and looks
impressed when she tells him
her night's plans over the cheque.
he doesn't pity her, nor does she herself.
she enjoys visit to the cinema alone
just as much as she does with her friends.
this is no different. this is well-deserved hedonism.

she feels liquor-light on her feet as she walks to
the train station, stopping to buy fries and banana pudding from a
burger joint with good honey mustard to keep her from drifting like
breadcrumbs in a bird. she eats and watches rain clouds and Port
Credit, Long Branch, Mimco go by before the GO reaches Exhibition.
she decided after Boygenius last summer
that outdoor locations were superior.
she knows it's bad etiquette to miss the openers
but the shrill vocals of the emerging screamo band
isn't her style and the rain is only just starting to cease.
there's a booth that sells her a disposable vape for $1 (blasphemy)
on her way to her seat; she'd brave the lawn
with her friends for the experience
but Boygenius was heard more than seen
due to her less than ideal height and
she wants to ingrain this night in her mind.

Cavetown dances underneath spotty red mushrooms

and plays his guitar on a tree stump three times his size. he sings songs about finding comfort inside one's body, about embracing one's softness in the face of sharpness, he serenades with lyrics about falling in love with a girl before asking if they like girls too. she cries, *yes! me too!* Cavetown tells them that they are beautiful, that they are loved;
the children with pink, blue and white flags,
the children with mobility aids.
all admirers of music like the rest.
all singing and dancing together.

she buys a Cavetown tote bag and
Mother Mother shirt during the intermission.
she calls her girlfriend and tells her she
loves her and she wishes she were with her
but that in the meantime she feels so safe
amongst the young couples and
goth teens with supportive parents.
she feels comforted, alone but in company.

Mother Mother concurs in a blur
of red neon lights and songs telling stories of
young lovers hiding from a father with his gun,
a ghost haunting their former lover,
a child growing weary of their body.
the Guldemond siblings and their band
welcome the children into their family.
they are all ever-growing and healing,

they must all keep fighting the good fight.
they play a cover of *Where Is My Mind* by the Pixies
and of *Video Games* by her favourite, Lana Del Rey.

they play two encores,
declaring Toronto their favourite stop
on the tour thus far and end the concert as they began, in a brightly lit symphony of guitar, bass and drums.

it ends with a GO train ride and the realization that
a $43 ticket and an open mind can create the dearest memories.

Heartfelt Billy Talent - A Concert Review

David Di Pratola

Music is an art form which soothes the soul. It has the power to transport us to the deepest parts of our soul and to bring out our most passionate emotions and memories. I recently had the pleasure to attend the first day of the BECAUSE BEER CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL in Pier 4 Park Hamilton Ontario.

This festival was a first for me. Nothing says “let's all have a good time” like craft beer, ciders, and food trucks. The festival kicked off at 4 pm. Low and behold we were really early. It was not until we were comfortably laying on the grass that my partner informed me that Billy Talent was not expected to hit the stage until 8 PM!

There were plenty of festivities to tie us over for the 4 hour wait time however. The manner in which the craft beer stands were set up was pretty smart. The stands bordered the entire field of the festival, and so we perused them all with peaked interests. My partner was a fan of the ciders while I found myself frequenting a particularly refreshing dutch pale ale stand for most of the evening. The only annoying part is that the “Complimentary tokens” needed to earn a drink only granted you 4 Oz of alcohol, while two offered you a full glass. In order to get more you had to stand in line at one of the two token booths. For 10$ you could get 5 tokens - definitely a money grab if you ask me, but we digressed.

First to perform at 5:00 PM was a small town band from Whitby, Ontario known as Chastity. Initially, I was not too impressed by their performance, as the singer's voice did not seem to mesh well with the instrumentals. He had an early 2000's thing going on while the guitar and drums were definitely modern punk. We remained optimistic as they started to perform their most recent songs - we realised they must have done some touch ups because it definitely got better. Most notably Summer All Over Again had us banging our heads with enjoyment.

Next on stage was the Cancer Bats, who hit the stage at around 6 pm. Let me say, we were not impressed. My partner and I are not dismissive of screamo, but their music was just not for us. Constant screaming and loud instrumentals made the vocals essentially inaudible causing both of us to not be feeling the music. I can appreciate however, that a lot of the attendants to the concert did seem to enjoy their music. But the aggressivity of their sound just took us out of it.
Billy Talent finally hit the stage at 9:30 PM. Let me tell you, the wait, and the mud, and the rain, was all so worth it. They kicked off immediately with one of their most well-known songs Devil in a Midnight Mass. Remember how I said music has the power to transport us? Well, when they started their concert with that song, I was immediately taken back to my 6-year old self watching the music video when that song was released, when I realised I was in love with this band. I was also impressed with their singer, Ben Kowalewicz, who took the time to say "This is a Billy Talent Concert, if you see someone fall, you pick them up!" After they started, I found myself

turning to my partner and saying the same thing after every song: "that was fucking amazing".

I have spent my whole life listening to all their songs over and over, at home, at work, blasting in the car. Nothing prepared me for seeing them live. Not only does their sound come through perfectly in person, but I felt like I was experiencing their music for the first time ever even though I have probably heard their entire discography 100 times over. Emotions constantly came to the surface, with songs like Nothing to Lose, Billy Talent's raw perspective on suicide.

The most notable moment of the night was when they performed Try Honesty, a song about being lied to and wanting to take revenge as a result. Before the final breakdown of the song, Ben allowed the crowd to get out a few "Forgive me father, why should you bother now?" Before he gave a heartfelt speech. The words will forever be singed into my brain: "In this fucked up world, there are so many things dividing us, causing us to separate and hate each other. As long as you live your life true, be an honest, kind, and good person, they cannot hurt us!". Let me tell you, I turned to my partner and just began crying like a literal infant.

Needless to say, this was the best rock concert of my 24 year long life I ever had the privilege of seeing, and I have been to several concerts. Besides the fact that it rained like hell, we had to wait several hours, and we were not exactly impressed with the openers, it was all so worth it. Billy Talent is so much more than a punk rock band. They are a real, raw, and genuine group of artists who have created a

subculture of fiercely loyal fans for a reason. They love, and care for their audience. They recognize that so many people are going through hardship, and so they provide an outlet of joy through music, and that concert was living proof that everyone feels it from them.

It is no wonder that from now on, any time I am aware that Billy Talent has an upcoming concert, I am there, 110%.

On Leonard Cohen's You want It Darker

Hanna Kowal

You Want It Darker

Titillating blindfold of the holy,
tantalising trepidation: the old me,
I am not your victim, Adonai
as if you are x, I am y.

Here I am.

Why
must all of the will
that is harnessed
through You
implicitly make me will-less?

Here I am.

Operatic chills
& mobile darkness
though I cannot see it,
on my back is a harness
Lord, all your harshness holds the leash,

I'll take your dare
& use my teeth

tear up the flesh
of your creations.

Here I am.

Vilified, I stake my claim
I am your opposite
the burning is a composite
of your stories.

Here I am.

Treaty

Forever your watcher,
a wrecked soul
without the surety
of our purity
& I mourn
for the shackles,
the chains we had

The world seems to be celebrating
though I can't fathom how
to your memory, I bow
I hate how I am now

If our loves had only agreed,
if your being could concede
if fate aligned with my marrow's greed
that could have been our treaty.

On The Level

Leaving the temptation
can mean leaving life behind
to leave the lost, a blessing
& to leave the love, a crime.

There's the right path & the proper way
the moments saying 'why don't you stay?'

I was fighting not rewriting
that reality away.

Scent & secrets
breath from my lungs
though beautiful, not home

Now old & worn
I'm looking back
in memory, I roam.

Leaving the Table

Quitting time means reflections of if
if that was me
or we were we
if now could be
my eyes on the frames,
some recognition,
of us or your name
but I've become
these resonant strums
it's my own fault
so tame
your worries, it's not you
but I'm out of the game.

If I Didn't Have Your Love

A different kind of broken,
the fullest type of lost
when your love isn't with me,
everything is the cost.

Nothing:
what everything would be–
weather, water, leaves on the trees–
dim & dumb
no light from the sun,
that's what I'd feel.

Yes, nothing's ever true
no such thing as skies a-blue
it's a false world, a dead one too
without your love.

See me: stone in the sea,
solid & sinking
no soul in me
could beauty ever be
without you, nothing is real.

Travelling Light

Spine flickers with the strings
until voice locks it into place
dreamer delivers his confessions;
these are the truths we face

a life lost in chord progressions
poetics lacking grace
bidding farewell, late lessons
what lyric cannot replace

When the artist is a nomad,
small connections along the way,
in recollection and reflection
wishes he had learned to stay

Carry nothing
but what helps making
& of the made,
he left behind.

Empty living,
ages shifting
& only memory
can remind.

Then the traveller

sees the dimmer,
heartbeats slimmer
& resolved.

If old love
could bring a glimmer
nomadic dreamer
shall statically evolve.

It Seemed the Better Way

Enlightened are the dark
emboldened are the weak,
to the purveyor of the salvation,
used to believe the words they'd speak

what say I can't protest,
why say I can't, this hoax–
in hymns & strings I'm silenced
it's beauty & a joke.

I know I've fallen for it
with peace, death, love, they coax
long gone is the believer
their words had once evoked

with ceremony of red
veins spilt into a glass
truth is a loose thread
& sanctity won't last

So entice me back with those tunes
& words I won't believe
sucked into the last answers
with nothing up my sleeve.

Those leaders of the faiths

better merchants than I
playing on lost confusion
to enforce their truths of why.

Steer Your Way

It's a game of self-guidance
through the maze of the eternal
the emotion truer than structures external
& it's all just rushing by you
though you run you fall behind
can you be good or wise or ancient
what is treasure
are you kind?

Don't you feel it slipping through you?

It's the holy land you've lost
as we are never something solid
actions always have a cost
& this Earth crumbles around you,
through the rubble you speed on
steer your way
through the everything
though everything is gone
day by day
thought by thought.

HELP ME LORD FROM THESE FANTASIES IN MY HEAD

Sophia Eleni (Inspired by *Daughter* by Beyonce)

CLEANSE ME HOLY TRINITY FROM THIS MARIJUANA SMOKE SMELL IN MY HAIR

the last whispers of sunlight set the
stained glass in the white chapel aflame and Miele's knees ached in the front pew.
it was here, clutching her father Pierre's heirloom rosary beads, where she
often dreamt of what her life might have been if things happened differently;
she might have fled to some smoky English university
rather than a Southern Ontario community college.
she might have fallen in love with a bird bone-structured boy with a gentle heart,
rather than her high school history teacher Mr. Lark
with impatient, grabby hands and hungry, wolfish eyes.

her father was right, those nights on the porch with his lit joint,
saying there was no use in daydreaming.
it was why she'd chosen to study finance over history,
aside from trying to cleanse herself of Jonathan Lark.
Pierre would eventually support this cause by putting
a bullet in the back of his skull one April afternoon

before the police bestowed a matching, fatal wound upon her father.

for Miele, where there was love, there was always hatred—
just as there was Lance and there was Kayleigh and there was Summer.
her self-proclaimed closest friends;
three students joining her in the front pew at the funeral
or three bodies laid out on the floor?
never good at heeding her father's words,
Miele could no longer discern fantasy from actuality.

she pulled strawberry blond strands of hair from her
scalp anxiously with trembling fingers. they stained her hair the colour of wine.
she prayed that wherever her father was, he was just proud of her.

I REALLY TRIED TO STAY COOL BUT YOUR ARROGANCE DISTURBED MY SOLITUDE

Miele was sure that Lance's favourite hobby was arguing.
be it with his widowed mother,
his girlfriend Emily he'd met on some radical Conservative sex chatroom,
their calculus professor Dr. Elder, waitresses,
white girl feminists with Taylor Swift lyrics in their bio on Twitter,
teenage neo-Nazis on Twitch, the grocery clerk with a purple pixie cut and a they/them button at the market as well as the tree-hugging Kayleigh.

Summer was immune to the conflict Lance lured out of the confrontational
because she reminded him, he lived in his mother's basement.
it was like spraying a waspish, deeply insecure cat with a bottle of cold water.
Miele was mostly immune to his fights-of-fancy because she just nodded along to whatever he said.
after a childhood with her father, she didn't
have the stomach to conjure up counter arguments.
to people like Lance, arguing was an art and Miele was much too tired
to want to do anything besides eat a bowl of silent strawberries in her bed, let alone craft.

she was mostly immune, though that wasn't actual— was it?

(just like the rising and falling of his chest)
if Lance's favourite hobby was arguing, then his second was proving Miele wrong somehow. Robert Wagner didn't kill Natalie Wood, she was a drunken floozy who couldn't swim.
Courtney Love didn't kill Kurt Cobain, he was a washed up hack at the end of his rope.
I never said Kayleigh was fat, I said I could hear her thighs slapping together-
God, it was a joke! 'Ele, why the fuck did you pick this place, the service is shit.

it had been her birthday dinner she'd booked reservations for months in advance.
she'd smiled, said sorry and screamed her vocal cords raw into her pillow that night.
(Lance was unfamiliarly quiet when she smothered him in his bed.)

THEY AIN'T EVER BEEN SAFE ONES I DON'T FELLOWSHIP WITH THESE FAKE ONES

Kayleigh was always amid some sort of crisis.
it often depended on the status of whatever social movement she was supporting on her Instagram that week.
the ecofeminist movement, anti-capitalism, anti-vaccination, anti-consumerism,
anti-jock, Health at Every Size, Save the Trees, Save the Bees, Save the Children.
Brianna from Portfolio Management can't come to our anti-deforestation rally the weekend of Exams, apparently she's getting her IUD that day. like, the bitch loves the smell of smoke for realsies.

a client at Aritzia had complained about a blonde associate neglecting the changing room in favour of texting?
they were just discriminating against her hair colour.
she could have been messaging her mom about her dying grandmother.
Kayleigh's grandmothers had both passed before she'd entered middle school.

one of the business students brushed past her in the hall a bit too brusquely?
they would surely be spending the afternoon psychoanalysing his superiority complex.

her hairstylist had dyed buttery highlights instead of cream? (or was it wine-coloured too now?)
no Miele, they're not the same tone. have you been listening to a word I've been saying?

all Miele did was listen.
all Kayleigh did was wait for Miele to finish speaking
before she could speak over her again.
Mr. Lark's face was plaguing her at night again?
you got to live every girl's fantasy and fuck a hot, older teacher. I don't get what's such nightmare-fuel about that.
Miele's breathing corpse was isolated in her dorm under the weight of another depressive episode? *girl, you are squandering that bikini body. like I'd kill for those tits, stop throwing yourself a pity party. do something about your hair for God's sake.*

Miele twisted a lock of cut hair between her fingers.
she still couldn't tell the difference between butter and cream.

THEY KEEP SAYIN' THAT I AIN'T NOTHIN' LIKE MY FATHER BUT I'M THE FURTHEST THING FROM CHOIR BOYS AND ALTARS

Summer was the last nail in the coffin, so to speak,
even though she and Miele had been friends first.
well, their fathers had been friends first,
if watching your daughters play dollies and sing made-up hymns—
while Pierre questioned *how did i make something as soft as her*—
counted as the foundation of a friendship.

when Summer's father left town with his truck packed
and his back turned to her and her mother for the very last time,
she'd turned on Miele.
maybe my Daddy left us because he got sick of hearing your high voice every weekend.
she'd made sure to speak lower around Summer from then on. but it wasn't the pitch of her voice that she had complained about.
it was Miele's voice to begin with.

Pierre's temper had taught Miele how to sand the edges of the things she had to say until they were smooth on the ears.
it was down to a science, a subject Summer had always needed her help in.
no words that parted Miele's lips went unlacerate by Summer's sharp tongue, to the point that after her father's death she'd stopped speaking at all.
Lance and Kayleigh hadn't noticed the sudden silence in all their noise (until she'd made them silent too).

Summer seemed to revel in the absence of her presence (until she was begging *no no no please 'Ele no please don't please i just didn't want to be alone i'm sorry i'm so sorry please forgive me*)

when they were little girls, Summer had told Miele that she never would have guessed Pierre was her father. *because he's scary and you're not.*

for the first time in her life, Miele felt her father close. she wasn't alone.
her friends were all here with her.
(they did make friendlier corpses.)

Club Sandwich

inspired by Billie Eilish's "THE DINER"

Victoria "Flip" Filippo

The first time I saw Jessica Bloom was at the Diner. I don't remember which one, and because I was so star-stricken I hadn't bothered to look. She wore thick-rimmed sunglasses and this paper-bag looking jumpsuit, but I knew it was her because of the way she moved. When I saw it I thought immediately, that could be my wife. I stayed up until three in the morning watching her interviews, studying her every movement, the way her signature red-painted lips would curl into a smile and around her words. I knew we were meant to be because she's a Pisces and I'm a Capricorn. She likes dogs and the colour blue and her favourite food is cheeseburgers. My plan to go and talk to her was interrupted by a burly looking man with hair all over his arms and chest. I had no arm hair, no chest hair–and that was better than being hairy and ugly. Before she left, she looked right at me through her lowered sunglasses, and winked knowingly. Like we had a secret.

Jessica Bloom looks up at me. She's the only light in my dim bedroom. I forgot to pay the electricity bills. Her hair is perfectly curled and styled, spilling over one side of her shoulder. Her red lipstick matches her deep red gown, sparkling with little diamonds, or maybe it's her skin. Her milky white shoulder gives the camera

attitude, and her face is fixed in a state of calm and sensuality. I move with this in my mind, thinking about her hair in my face, how her skin might feel. Moments later, my hands are sticky with shame and the thought of Jessica Bloom.

I go back to the Diner and I write my first letter to Jessica Bloom. She has no mailing address.

It's the middle of the night. I have the letter in my pocket, and it weighs like a cinder block but I move quietly. I watch her move through her kitchen in this short dress, and I want to take a picture to commemorate this moment but I didn't bring my phone. She turns off the lights and her entire home seems to fall asleep. I wait twenty minutes before crawling through her kitchen window—before that, I spent some time familiarising myself with the home security system, and figured that cutting off a red cord was better than waking her. My leather gloves dare to fall off with all the sweat that's building up within them. I perch the letter on her kitchen table against a jar of peonies (presumably left by the hairy man from the Diner) and open her fridge, observing the innards: a half-eaten sandwich, juice for cleanses, arugula, and kombucha. I take the other half of her sandwich. It smells like her lipstick, and as I'm eating this sandwich I'm making out with Jessica Bloom. I don't dare go to her bedroom and wake her, but it's a thought. The sandwich comes home with me, soggy with our saliva.

The next morning I take a walk around Jessica Bloom's neighbourhood only to find it infested with police and reporters

clamouring about. It's like watching ants fighting over a crumb. A cop looks at me and beckons me over. Asks me if I know anything. I shake my head and say, no sir, I don't even know who Jessica Bloom is. Which hurt to say, and if she's reading this, know I meant nothing by it, honey. He looks at me wide-eyed and says, you don't know who she is? She was in that movie with the...you know, and makes a gesture like he's trying to show off a pair of big tits. I want to slap him. I shake my head. I don't have TV, officer. He let me go. When I walk around a second time, a huge car is rolling out from her gates, and in the passenger seat is Jessica Bloom. She looks at me. I look at her.

Jessica Bloom now has two guards standing outside her gates. But not in her backyard, which is easily accessible from the hill just outside of it. I watch her, and the burly guy is back, and they're in the kitchen. She's on the table and he's nestled between her legs and they're kissing and it's making me sick. An anger boils inside me like no man has known. She pushes him away and begins to walk from him, but he grabs her by the wrist. Hits her. Hard. I scream out, and I hear one of the guards say, What was that? I hide in the bushes until it's clear. When I come back up, Jesssica is crying on the floor and the burly man is gone. I didn't sleep that night thinking of his lips on yours, Jessica. And the fact that he hit you...that made me mad.

The burly man's name was actually Andre. He had a K-1 visa, but has been here for more than 90 days. I told immigration. When that didn't work, I found where he lived. I had to do it, Jessica, if not he'd continue hurting you. You should thank me. I saved you.

I don't sleep for ten nights. I feed Andre bread and water, and make sure he doesn't leave the storage unit. I begin to camp out on the hill behind your house. I watch you mourn Andre. I pretend the bushes are you, and I curl up next to them, naked, whispering, it'll be okay, Jess.

There's a cosy spot underneath your house. I hear your comings and goings. I hear your cries and your singing. I smell your shampoo and the dirt beneath me. I make friends with the maggots. At night, I crawl inside and take more of your food. Not enough to raise attention, but enough that I don't starve to death and cause a huge problem. I smell your lavender body wash and leave my remnants in tissues and in your toilet. I flush, of course. I don't hear you ever talk about why Andre comes around anymore, or how thankful you are for that.

I work up the courage to finally knock on your door. Covered in dirt and with greasy hair I know I look crazy but you have to know it's me. You go pale in the face when you answer the door, but you still look beautiful to me: a silk robe and your hair post-wash, smelling like your shampoo. Your beautiful toes are tucked into a pair of fluffy sandals. Your eyes drift from my face to my fist, where I'm holding peonies—stolen from your front yard. I hand them to you, and tell you not to scream, because this whole thing will be messed up and that will be no good. You don't, and you let me inside. You said, You left that letter? And like the proud motherfucker I am, I said yes. I asked

you to marry me, and you said the worst thing you could have said to me, which was No. I begin to cry and try to reason with her: but you know me. I got rid of Andre for you. You're protected now by me and you're not even thankful. And Jess, I'm so sorry, but I got so mad I hit you. You were so upset and I left my final note for you, which asked you to meet me at the Diner where we met. I ran out the door and was tackled by one of your goons in the front. I tried to tell them, but I'm her husband! They didn't listen.

The cops told me I'd have $250 thousand in bail. But that didn't matter because I couldn't pay it, and I know you would. I just hope when you visit me you'll bring a veil. It's really a good thing I remembered your phone number. 310-807-3956. 310-807-3956. 310-807-3956.

You don't bring a veil. Actually, you come surrounded by five men, all in black, and you sit across from me. I don't feel handsome in jail orange. It brings out my yellow skin and the blonde in my hair. Grown men aren't blonde, and besides, I know you don't like blondes. You ask me to stop calling you, and you give me a restraining order. I tell you I'll oblige under one condition. You roll your eyes, but you can see I'm serious and I know I've frightened you darling, but I just needed one thing to get me through my jail time. You kiss my hand. I don't wash it for the six years I'm in jail.

Six years later, I go back to your house. You've moved out, and now a stupid rich family lives there. A neighbour tells me that you died of a broken heart. Others say a crazed fan broke into your home and

killed you. I would have never done that, Jess. I just wanted to love you. I kiss your now-tattooed lips on my hand.

Growing into Guitar: The Spark that Makes a Musician

Hanna Kowal

When I was about ten years old, I ran into my parents' bedroom and woke them up. I was filled with excitement about an infomercial for Keith Urban Guitars for beginners. I didn't even know who Keith Urban was at the time, nor had I ever been a country fan, but the allure of picking up a guitar and being able to make music seemed so wonderful to me. At the time, my parents didn't buy me the guitar. Of course, I had shown the same excitement when I saw an infomercial for a robot vacuum and an air fryer, so how seriously were they supposed to take that?

Beyond that early morning infomercial excitement, I never mentioned wanting a guitar to them again for years. Even so, that allure of a guitar never went away. I can trace all the passion and excitement for music back to that spark felt by my seven-year-old self. Less than a decade later, I became a licensed busker and played my originals on the streets of Mississauga.

When I was fifteen and in high school, I took a class learning classical guitar, and I learned how to pluck Mary Had a Little Lamb and Auld Lang Syne. I learned how to spider-walk up and down the first four frets, and which note was where, and every part of me wanted to learn more.

I turned to YouTube for basic chords, and eventually those chords became songs, and my parents bought me a Yamaha FS800 that I named Erato. The switch from an old school nylon string to my beautiful acoustic guitar meant everything. At that time, Ed Sheeran's songs were my greatest teacher. His music had such diverse elements of guitar that learning his songs gave me a comprehensive leap into my music. From using the guitar as percussion to using experimental and complex chords, I developed the skills to be comfortable enough with my instrument that I started to write my own songs. I practised every night and would play for my friends and parents and family sitting around the fire.

I wrote about love because the cliché of writing what you know is all too true, and it was through my song writing that I learned my true feelings about myself and my relationship. As I got older, my songs became more about self-discovery, anger, and love again. The themes change based on my situation in life, as I am sure they will continue to do.

As an eighteen-year-old singer-songwriter, I did not feel ready to have my songs recorded and out in the world. Two years later, and I still feel that way. My songs are something personal and intimate, and I like seeing the faces of the people who hear me play. Following this thought process, I sent in an audition for one of fifty busking licences that were available, and I got one. Then came one of the most rewarding summers of my life. I played my music when I wanted to. I had a jar that used to hold blackberry jam from the Kawartha Winery in front of me, and for the first time, I made money

from my music. More than that, people looked me in the eye and told me they loved the songs I played: my originals.

Music will forever be my comfort. So far it has taken me from a child fascinated by the shape of a guitar on a commercial to a young adult who has an outlet for her passion and emotions. It grows with me, and I know that it will continue to fulfil me throughout my life.

Talia D'Intino

To Bring You My Love - PJ Harvey

look behind me and see
trail of blood, remnants of skin
dragging myself limb by limb
you didn't ask me to, i did it all
on my own
and you think it's crazy
working myself to the bone
but i love you baby, you
have my devotion
you have me, every last bit
every second i'm in motion
taking steps and stealing chances
to catch your eye for just a second
i bring you my love
you bring me passion
don't you dare look away
when you make love to me

Girl, so confusing - Charli xcx
sometimes i think we hate each other
god forbid pretty women be peaceful
it's what they want, hate preferred
if we're united, visions can't be obscured

so you try and fuck my boyfriend
but you don't even like him that much
still, i rip your hair off your head
when i see you again
can't be pretty with a bald spot

sometimes i think we love each other
we're just too alike when we compare
i write poetry, you throw parties
and you invite me, and i show up to say
i'm sorry about your hair

Super Graphic Ultra Modern Girl - Chappell Roan

you act surprised when i show up
with my hair straight and a face full of makeup
who told you to wear those jeans?
i think they lied when you said you looked nice
you don't get a single joke i make
but want me to think you're funny
really, i'd prefer it if you were smart

i keep my girls in stitches, and you won't
say it, but you think funny women are bitches
why are we at a club
if you won't dance?
why are you buying me a drink?
to get your hands down my pants?
i shouldn't have spent a friday night
on a first date
i've never been crazy, i'm not "too much",
you are simply just lame

Snow Angel - Reneé Rapp

i wish i could go back to
the winter in twenty twenty two
before i let you back in,
before you made me out to be a fool
in front of my parents, you poured your heart
and i wanted to believe you,
ready for the fresh start
but just like you were raised, all your parents
taught you
was to take and take and take
and make me believe that i was
making mistakes
i'm too emotional, i'm too mean

how often did you make me cry?

i hate you more than i ever loved you
you loved me more than you knew how to handle
and my friend told me you never let your new girl
go to sleep thinking it was her fault

because you let yourself destroy me
blood on your hands, crawling on your knees

i'm happier without you
i will always be

Behind the Beats

Art Director

A skilled writer in both poetry, non-fiction, and screenplay writing, Talia D'Intino is a 23-year-old up-and-coming writer from Niagara, Ontario. Focusing on the art direction for Btwn The Beats, she has a keen eye for detail and design. When she's not creating gorgeous visuals or editing a nonfiction article, she can be found with her friends, family, or her cat, Olive. She has been published in The Globe & Mail, Toronto Star, and The Walrus.

Poetry Editor

Sophia Makrigiannis is a young Toronto-based writer, poet and playwright. While she can usually be found opening her heart to the world by way of her novels in verse the martyrdom of saint matthew and pas de deux, as well as working on her magnum opus And The Other, these days you can find her editing poetry for *Btwn the Beats.* Here, she dedicates herself to finding new ways to express and organise the raw thoughts and emotions of emerging artists.

Prose Editor

Victoria "Flip" Filippo is an Italian-Canadian writer with a love for writing in all its forms, working on her novel BOVINE as well as screenplays for both film and television. As prose editor of *Btwn the Beats*, she is focused on writing that stands out against a dim crowd, bringing excellent writing to all readers. Victoria is not just a prose editor, but also an occasional bass player and coffee snob. Find her published work in B222's Spring 2024 issue.

Formatter

David Di Pratola is an Italian French-Canadian fiction writer as well as an avid writer of poetry. He has written several short stories and screenplays as is currently working on his fiction novel Gods & Beasts. As the formatter for *Btwn the Beats*, he is dedicated to giving the magazine an appealing aesthetic as well as organising its extensive content. With music being a large source of his passion, *Btwn the Beats* has offered him an outlet to channel this passion into the magazine.

Print coordinator

Hanna Kowal, author of People Pleaser: A Collection of Poems, specialises in poetry and creative non-fiction. She contributes to Heroica.co, has poetry featured in You Might Need To Hear This, and participated in Word Sleuth's international author interview series. Hanna is passionate about equality, wellness, and music. Her work can be found at https://hckowal.com/published-works/.