

Claims Department



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MIDNIGHT OIL

johnnyeponymous@gmail.com

I love Midnight Oil. I have ever since I saw *Beds are Burning* on MTV. Their sound is not easily definable, but also nothing too strange. If I had to call them something, it would be a rock band.

Well, maybe a political rock band.

They were the forerunner to Rage Against the Machine in that every song dealt with something important, like indigenous peoples' rights, or nuclear disarmament, or environmental collapse, or the denial of historical wrongs. They touched on all of that and more. And they rocked while doing it.

The first set of five is done, so a re-set for the next five is about to happen for February. The next five? Tears for Fears, La Roux, Fiona Apple, Henry Mancini, and Fishbone. Coming in February.

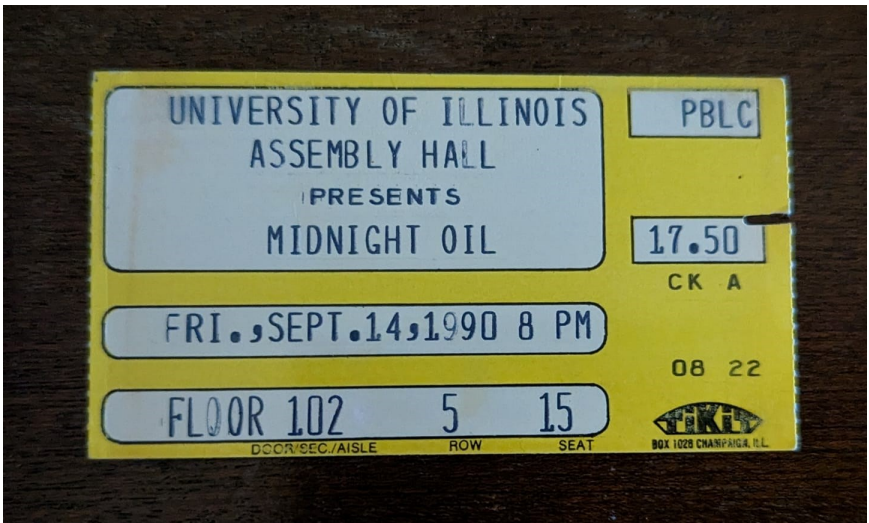
For the first time in this series, it's not just me!!!

OK, enough of this! I got stuff to say!

***Musical: Midnight Oil at Assembly Hall,
University of Illinois
By Terrence Miltner***

I went down to the University of Illinois for the September 14th, 1990 concert by Midnight Oil at Assembly Hall, hitting the show with David Douglass and staying with him at Koinonia, while also working in a visit with Angie while I was there. The band was the best I had ever seen for being able to reproduce the quality of their studio sound in live performance, which I had come to be used to the idea that that wasn't really possible in a live setting. A band called The Origin opened up for them that was kind of interesting, but I couldn't decide what I really thought about their singer, which is all I really recall about that.

Before the Oils began their set, an announcer let everyone know that photography was strictly forbidden. This didn't stop someone from opening up with a professional-level flash during the opening number, causing Peter Garrett to leap into the audience once he'd



finished his current verse. His immense frame began swimming over the crowd, which only came up to his waist as he walking on the empty seats vacated by the standing audience. He worked his way back to the photographer and reamed him out while the band held their place, just sort of jamming and watching the action. Then Garrett worked his way back to stage and finished the tune. David had viewed the whole thing with what I took to be mock alarm, seeing the immense figure of Garrett coming our way and beginning to jabber, "Oh no! He's coming for me! *He's going to kill me!!*" It kinda looked all apocalyptic like that, to see this giant bald spider of a man swim above the people and moving in your direction.

After the show, we discovered that Dave's roommate had been hanging with one of the roadies and had scored [*The Green Disc*](#), which the roadie described as something the band had put together for them. And so I felt lucky when I ended up with a copy of that.

To the best of my recollection, the setlist for the show was something like:

King Of The Mountain (an incredible opener: the energy of this was explosive and set the tone for the night)

Dreamworld
Put Down the Weapon
Bullroarer
The Dead Heart
Stars Of Warburton
Warakurna
Forgotten Years

Best Of Both Worlds
Shakers and Movers

Blue Sky Mine (great lights on this number, going to a
sort of blue sunset behind the band on the last note)

River Runs Red

One Country (just Garrett and Moginie on stools under
a spotlight, with Moginie on a six-string acoustic)

Bedlam Bridge

Sell My Soul

Beds Are Burning

Sometimes



Short Memory – A Powerful Song.

By Chris Garcia

*Somehow, despite owning it multiple times, I'd never listened to 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 all the way through. It's an OK record (I had it on vinyl way back when) but when going through the Spotify *This is Midnight Oil* playlist, the fifth song was *Short Memory*.*

And man, did it hit me.

It's not like I didn't know that whatever song on that playlist that popped up wouldn't be dealing with big issues, but I wasn't ready for this approach. From the get go, they're playing on an idea – 'you know this. You already know.'

Conquistador of Mexico, the Zulu and the Navaho

The Belgians in the Congo short memory
Plantation in Virginia, the Raj in British India

The deadline in South Africa short memory

The story of El Salvador, the silence of Hiroshima

Destruction of Cambodia short memory

There's no great elaboration, no recounting of the wrongs committed. Just the briefest recognizable naming of events. The idea here wasn't to hammer in the ideas of the atrocities committed within these various times, but to remind you that you know these names, can probably talk about these events to a degree.

And most likely you're not bringing them up.

This is an effective technique for bringing these things to light. I mean, me, not the most thoughtful of listen-

ers (and somewhere Pauline Oliveros is tut-tuting at me!) realized that I could tell you all about these, about the conquest of a portion of my people in Mexico by the Spaniards, about the Zulu's conflict with the colonizers, about the massacre of the Navaho. I've seen at least a dozen documentaries about Leopold and The Congo, about The Raj in India. I know these things, and all they had to do to bring these issues to light is mention them.

This was 1982, so El Salvador was an on-going concern, South Africa was still under Apartheid, and the Khmer Rouge were only seven years in power and the horrors of the genocide of The Killing Fields were coming to light more and more every day. Midnight Oil knew this, and Peter Garret's vocals make it he's calling not only the nations of the world out for their inaction and refusals to deal with these ideas, but those of us who were aware for our lack of action as well.

That idea hit me hard.

The most interesting, and immediate, portion dealt with Afghanistan. The conflict there that would ultimately lead to the rise of the Taliban was a significant part of the song.

A smallish man Afghanistan, a watch dog
in a nervous land
They're only there to lend a hand short
memory
Wake up in sweat at dead of night
And in the tents new rifles hey short
memory

The conflict in Afghanistan started at the end of 1979, and by 1982 was at it's hottest. It was the biggest blow-up in the Cold War, and it was the US backing what would become the Taliban, against the Russians. The conflict was clearly a Cold War match-up, but played so differently to the world stage. America made it about Afghani freedom from the invading Russians; the Russians made it about subduing the Afghani Civil

War. In fact, it was about Russian expansionism, and America's containment doctrine.

This is one of my fave songs by the Oils today. It's just a great piece of songwriting that understands that the impact isn't always in bashing over the head, but nudging you with the acknowledgement that they know what you know and aren't talking about.it.



Another Music on a Plane Story

By Chris Garcia

I flew a lot in the years between 1993 to 1997. I would fly 4 or 5 times a year between California and Boston, plus side trips to Philadelphia for an ECW show, Atlanta for the Olympics, LA for a national collegiate leadership conference, and Washington D.C. when I had my internship at the Smithsonian. As I've said, I ALWAYS got the headphones, and I always read the entire in-flight magazine. In late 1993/early 1994, there was always one song on the in-flight I had to hear.

Truganini is at least slightly mis-conceived. She's often been referred to as the last of the Tasmanian indigenous people, but in fact there were several others, including one who spoke the same language (though may have been of mixed-heritage) and was recorded singing several traditional songs of her people. Midnight Oil used her name to represent an Australia before the British arrived, and how the laying of railroad tracks, roads cutting through the outback, and the idea that the Western luxuries those brought with them also damaged the soul of the nation to modern day.

As specific symbols, The Oils used Truganini and the artist Albert Namatjira. Truganini was considered something of a celebrity during her lifetime in the mid-19th century, but she was still a ward of the state, and the lyric "I see Truganini in chains" may be both figurative and literal.

Albert Namatjira was an early-to-mid 20th century painter. He was a speaker of an Arrernte language, one of the major language groups of the Indigenous people in and around Alice Springs. He was an artist. Not only any artist, but one of the finest, most beloved artists of the 1930s through 50s. His work is highly

influenced by the Western art. His landscapes capture light in much the same way Maynard Dixon, a contemporary of Namatjira, painted. There's a lovely painterliness to both of their works, not an abstraction, but an interpretation of real imagery in a way that is also expressive. Certainly not Impressionist, but influenced by their way of expressing the world.

The lyrics that deal with his story ('I see Namatjira in custody' and later "I see, Namatjira in dignity') represent the changing view of Australians towards the man. He was released from being a ward of the state, which meant he could buy alcohol, which was forbidden to Indigenous Australians. He had purchased a bottle of rum and left it on his trunk. Someone else drank it, committed a crime, and Namatjira was given jail time and deemed culpable. Most of his jail time was over-turned, and he would go on to become one of Australia's most beloved painters.

But I didn't know that as I listened to it on TWA's in-flight. No. There was no Wikipedia for me to look it up on, and honestly, I just loved the song.

Midnight Oil w/ Wild Colonialists at The Edge in Palo Alto

I saw Midnight Oil at The Edge in Palo Alto on July 9th, 1994. This is remarkable for a couple of reasons. The Edge wasn't a big club, capacity might have been 500, and the stage wasn't huge either. Still, it was one of the best venues to see a show at in Silicon Valley. There were great sightlines, the sound system was great, and the bar was long and you could grab a seat and turn around and get a good view of the show. I saw dozens of shows there, from No Doubt (before they broke) and Skankin' Pickle, to Fishbone and Paula Cole. The Oils were the biggest act I'd see there at the time of the show, and I was psyched!

The good people at setlist.fm had the entire setlist up

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- Blue Sky Mine
- Put Down That Weapon
- Bullroarer
- King of the Mountain
- Surfing With a Spoon
- Sell My Soul
- Renaissance Man
- Only the Strong
- Outbreak of Love
- Dreamworld
- Didgeridoo Solo
- The Dead Heart

My Country
Forgotten Years
Don't Wanna Be the One
Beds Are Burning
Encore:
Truganini
Power and the Passion
Sometimes

Now, *that's* a good show, but that set list is just about perfect for a bunch of reasons.

Blue Sky Mine was a hit for The Oils back in 1990. It was #1 on the Modern Rock charts in the US, and the video had been in fair rotation on MTV. Opening with one of their bigger hits is always what you gotta do, and this time it worked perfectly. They followed that with two album cuts, neither of which I knew at the time, and then they went back to 1990 and *King of the Mountain*. It's a decent song, if a little opaque, but it's got an infectious beat and is one of their most sing-alongable tunes. The crowd, into it at every step, got more into the show here. I can remember this being the point where I started to feel the press of people in on me. As always at The Edge, I was right at the front.

The next few songs were pretty good, and as I recall the performance of *Renaissance Man* was particularly good, but they made two very smart choices. The song *Outbreak of Love*, a song I'm not particularly fond of, brought the energy in the room down a fair bit, which was fine, because then *Dreamworld* from the album *Diesel and Dust* brought the tempo and temperature of the room back up (and I remember it was stifling hot by this point).

Then, it was a Digeridoo solo.

I remember it was a one-handed gentleman playing it,

and it was amazing. A lot of folks used it as a time to go to the bathroom or the bar, but I was transfixed. It was so cool! I do think he played a piece of PCV pipe that could slide in and out like a trombone, but could be making that up.

After that, hit and hit. *My Country, Forgotten Years*, and ending the regular set with *Beds are Burning*, six years old at that point, but still their biggest mark on the US.

I do somewhat quibble with the posted order. I remember the band walking off the stage as the end of their set before the Digeridoo solo, and then that leading to the encore, but it could be they did two, or that was just considered a part of the regular show, but I do know the band was off the stage.

The opening song of the encore was *Truganini*, their most recent hit. It was a great song, and I've got a lot more to say about it later, but this is one of their absolute best songs, and the crowd LOVED it. The rest of the show kinda fed off that energy until *Sometimes*, a great song that lived in a place where bands like The Smithereens tended to tread.

The show was great, and it's sadly the only time I've managed to see Midnight Oil!