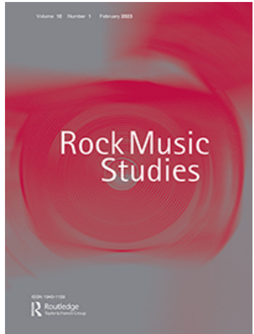

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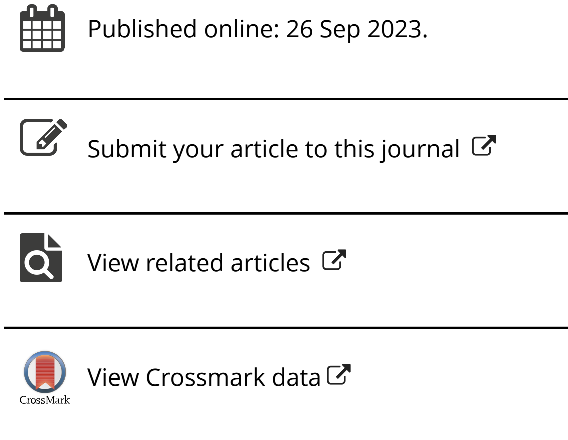

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Don’t Stop Believin’: Journey, Race, and the Making of a Rock Legend

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ABSTRACT

The success of America’s one-time most-popular band had everything to do with race. While rock and roll briefly integrated popular music at mid century, after Woodstock the form resegregated into rock, performed almost exclusively by and for white audiences, and soul, performed almost exclusively by and for Black listeners. Capitalizing on a racial backlash to the achievements of the civil rights movement, by the mid 1970s country-inflected rock reached the height of popularity among white audiences. But white American audiences have always hungered for Black music. When Journey added a Motown-influenced lead singer, they turned in the opposite direction: cultural appropriation. In a modern twist on minstrelsy without blackface, Journey delivered a “safe” form of Black music to the white audiences who still craved it. This is not immediately evident listening to Journey’s hits. It is only through a look at the origins of their most important composers, a careful analysis of their “deep cuts,” and discussion of exceptions that proved the rule, that the importance of race in the development of Journey’s popularity—and its culmination with their megahit “Don’t Stop Believin’”—becomes clear.

KEYWORDS

Journey; race; Motown; blues; whiteness; minstrelsy

Music and dance allow people to be more in touch with their emotions, especially repressed sexuality. Polite Western European culture considers emotion and sexuality to be carnal, animalistic, and uncivilized, revealing instincts better left repressed (Frith 144). Much of the history of racism is based on the idea, generated by white people (slavers, imperialists, and even common folk seeking advantage), that Black people are sexually primitive, childlike, and uncivilized (Frith 130–31). This has no basis in fact; African Americans and whites engage equally in “acceptable” and “unacceptable” sexual behaviors, for example (Frith 141). And there is no racial disparity in innate artistic talent; race is socially constructed and not biologically determined; melanin production is genetically unrelated to natural talents like musical pitch and rhythm. But just as Black people’s perceived sexual freedom has titillated repressed whites, Black people’s music, dance, and other artistic contributions have been simultaneously marginalized and covertly admired by white people restrained by society’s rhythm-denying straitjacket (Frith 126–27).

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Prior to the advent of rock and roll, popular music was segregated: The blues, gospel, jazz, and ragtime had been considered “race music” because of their origins in the African-American community and appeal to Black listeners. People of color were considered “racial,” while white people were considered “normal” and therefore “without” race. White audiences enjoyed country, music hall, and operetta; their exposure to race music was through “acceptable” white intermediaries like the jazz impresario Paul Whiteman, “white gospel,” and, of course, minstrelsy (Hajduk 9–10, 14). Minstrelsy allowed white people to temporarily revel in the rhythms that connected them to their innate barbaric emotions and sexual desires, “to escape periodically into an exotic world of pleasure, sensuality, and emotional freedom traditionally denied or suppressed within Western European culture” (Bertrand 196)—before returning to the safety of whiteness.

For a brief moment at mid century, rock and roll integrated popular music. The genre took seed at a time of national optimism following victory in World War II and flowered during the social revolution of the 1960s. Elvis Presley, Little Richard, and other rock-and-roll pioneers combined Delta blues, country, gospel, and rockabilly; British bluesmen like John Mayall, Peter Green, and Eric Clapton explicitly duplicated the Black Delta sensibility; Aretha Franklin borrowed from Mick Jagger and Mick from Aretha; and Santana combined mariachi heritage with Afro-Cuban rhythms and psychedelic surf, joining Jimi Hendrix and Sly and the Family Stone for a triumphant performance before an interracial audience at Woodstock (Hamilton). The Baby Boom generation was reordering society—or at least they were trying. This revolution integrated popular music at the same time it integrated buses, public schools, lunch counters, and *Star Trek* (Hamilton 3–7; Golland, “From Black Kiss”). “Rock and roll did more for integration than the church,” said civil rights leader Andrew Young, “and if I was going to choose who I was going to let into the Kingdom . . . I might have to choose Elvis” (Jackson 6).

But it ended with disillusionment thanks to the war in Vietnam, the urban crisis, and stagflation. Oil shocks, deindustrialization, and recession replaced the optimism of the 1950s with an overwhelming anxiety. The United States saw a backlash against the achievements of the civil rights era (Bowen; Chappell; Countryman; Deslippe; Golland, *Terrible Thing*; Purnell and Theoharis; Stein). As society sought familiarity in old patterns, popular music resegregated too (Hajduk xix, 134). As the hippies, peace signs, and patchouli receded, Presley was replaced by Lynyrd Skynyrd; the Allman Brothers eclipsed the British blues; and Santana disintegrated. Rock and roll resegregated, dividing into *rock*, primarily performed by and marketed to a white audience, and *soul*, by and for Black people (Hamilton).

Journey was founded in December 1973 by manager Herbie Herbert, guitar prodigy Neal Schon, and singer-organist Gregg Rolie, all formerly of Santana, along with Steve Miller’s former bass player (Ross Valory) and a rhythm guitarist who had previously performed with the Grateful Dead’s Jerry Garcia (George Tickner). All were white. They were soon joined by noted British blues drummer Aynsley Dunbar, also white, who had played with David Bowie and Frank Zappa (Selvin, Liner notes). These were young, vibrant musicians at the cutting edge of musicality and closely attuned to the latest currents in popular music (Flans). They were a progressive-rock supergroup that promptly failed to meet expectations. The 1977 addition of singer-songwriter Steve Perry, a white-identifying crooner[1] in the style of African-American Sam Cooke, gave

them new life and a new direction. The 1980 hiring of pianist-songwriter Jonathan Cain, a product of the postwar white suburban teenage milieu, added the final element.

Journey's most enduring hit, "Don't Stop Believin,'" combines multiracial, trans-American elements with a simple, familiar chord progression—a first, a fifth, a minor sixth, and a fourth (I-V-vi-IV), in E major. These happen to be the same four chords—rooted in African-American rhythm and blues—that Phil Spector used in the Teddy Bears' 1958 hit "To Know Him Is to Love Him." The Beatles used the same progression for "Let It Be"; Peter Tosh and Bob Marley in "No Woman, No Cry"; and the Rolling Stones in "Beast of Burden" (Markert 37). The lyrics of "Don't Stop Believin'" speak to the angst of the era: yearning, wistfulness, transition. And by inverting the sensibility of Jim Weatherly's "Midnight Train to Georgia," which spoke of defeat (specifically the failure of most Southern Blacks to achieve success in the North), Journey added a hint of promise, a road out of the darkness into which the country had seemingly fallen: "the midnight train going anywhere," accompanied by an accelerating guitar transit. It was the perfect complement to Ronald Reagan's "Morning in America," and it appealed to the same electorate (Perlstein).

* * *

In their earliest years, Journey was a band in search of an audience. During their 1976–77 tour, they were opening acts as often as headliners. They opened for Uriah Heep at the Vancouver Coliseum and then headlined the Starwood in Los Angeles (Read; Bensoua). At Bill Graham's "Day on the Green" in San Francisco, "Journey … clearly provided the afternoon's musical highlights" in a show that included Jeff Beck (Selvin, "S.F. Rock" 37). They made the pages of the prestigious *New York Times* for the first time after they "headlined a triple bill at the Palladium," a century-old former Broadway stage near New York's Union Square that had been converted into a rock venue. Reporter John Rockwell called out guitarist Neal Schon for "a few desultory lunges at his amplifiers.… [I]t was one of the most absurd, dispiriting things this observer has seen in a long time. If Journey wants to play it safe, fine; they do it pretty well. But please," he added, "let's not pretend any real relation to violent, old-fashioned rock-and-roll" (50). The *Los Angeles Times* was somewhat more forgiving in their review of the group's appearance with Hot Tuna at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium: "Its strong set was almost enough to salvage the evening … and no doubt would have done so had the billing been reversed" (Cromelin 10).

San Francisco rock promoter Bill Graham recognized that the problem was racial resegregation. As a Holocaust survivor, he felt an obligation to reverse it. Just as his colleague Berry Gordy at Motown had the African-American Jackson 5 record a cover of the hit "Doctor My Eyes" by the white Jackson Browne, Graham paired rock acts like Santana with soul acts like Booker T. (Atkinson; Barsocchini; Santana 241, 264–65; "Santana, Booker T. Will Play"; Sadler; Wald 245). Graham tried to help Journey too, enlisting Ike and Tina Turner to open for them at Albuquerque's Tingley Coliseum. But somehow the troubled couple were listed as headliners in the promotional materials, and much of the crowd left before Journey started—further indication of the growing racial split. "Their albums indicate they are an exceptional band," said one reporter, "but only

a hundred or so die-hards perceived . . . something, that held them there to the bitter end" (Andrews C-3).

These pairings often drew the ire of critics. Joel Selvin at the *San Francisco Chronicle* was particularly incensed by the choice to have Journey open for Sam Cooke's former guitarist, Bobby Womack, at the Berkeley Theater in March 1974, calling their "especially loud, crunching rock music . . . totally lost on the predominately [sic] black audience" and noting that "they will never make it as a soul act" ("Berkeley Theatre" 37), a sarcasm clearly intended for the promoters and managers but that demonstrated an ignorance of the African-American origins of rock and roll and played into the growing rift between its descendants, a rift that Graham was struggling to prevent with exactly such pairings (Wald 245).

It's not as if these pairings were musically unreasonable. When Graham paired Santana with Booker T., he was thinking about the alchemy that had created Santana's stardom in the first place: the mixture of Mexican music from Carlos Santana, Afro-Caribbean rhythms from conguero Michael Carabello, and blue-eyed '60s surf from lead singer-organist Gregg Rolie.

There were tensions between Rolie and Carlos,[2] as there are in any band. Rolie initially balked at playing such numbers as "Oye Como Va" because "it didn't sound like Cream or Hendrix or The Doors," according to Carlos (Santana 238). Rolie preferred progressive-rock songs like "Hope You're Feeling Better." Carlos and Carabello, for their part, "used to tease Gregg about the fact that he walked like John Wayne. . . . We'd imitate the way he talked, too" (Santana 238). That these tensions were racial may have mattered to the internal politics of the group, but they were unknown to the fans.

It seemed a no-brainer to transplant Rolie into Journey with former child-prodigy guitarist Neal Schon, who made his connection to rock's African-American roots even more explicit. Indeed, Schon called Aretha Franklin "the one person who really taught me a lot about phrasing on the guitar," adding:

> I'd go see her at Fillmore West . . . and getting chills all night long, the fur was standing up on my arms. She completely turned me on. Still does today. She is the one that twisted my head around, her soul. I remember listening to her records and trying to pick up her phrasing, so I think that's where my approach came from, from trying to emulate a voice.

So it's understandable that Graham thought he could recreate magic by pairing Journey with Ike and Tina Turner.

The problem was that, while he observed the magic, he didn't understand it. In the late '60s, white youth were intrigued by the integrated ethos of rock; Santana's appeal to white audiences at Woodstock was part of the baby-boomer rebellion against the open racism of their parents' generation. Seeing Santana on the same bill as Booker T. made them feel cultured, urbane, modern. But, by the mid '70s, audiences had resegregated, and white listeners wanted music without actual Black performers.

Journey finally clicked in 1976 when they opened three nights for Lynyrd Skynyrd in the Pacific Northwest. "Everywhere we played with Skynyrd," reported Schon, "we commanded two, three encores" (Masley 4D). Without intending it, Journey's progressive rock had become "coded" for the white audiences who also dug Skynyrd, with their white Southern rock replete with an onstage Confederate flag. But, all too quickly, the vagaries of the tour schedule took Journey away, and they spent the rest of that fall

playing in Europe. A plane crash killed several members of Lynyrd Skynyrd the following October, and Journey never performed with them again ("Concerts Wiki: Journey"). Journey would need to make some major changes instead (Selvin, Liner notes). That's where Steve Perry came in.

Stephen Ray Perry was born in 1949 to Portuguese immigrants in California's San Joaquin Valley. His father was a singer and big band leader who performed songs by Count Basie and Duke Ellington: "I was 3 years old when I started singing around the house. Mom couldn't believe it. She told me I'd hit these high screaming notes that would go right through her head." Before long he was singing in a barbershop quartet: "[W]e would perform for the Chamber of Commerce and other city functions" (Cucu 20–22; see also "Journey's Steve Perry"; Lufkin; Speake; Trunk; Wosahla).

It was in high school that Perry developed his passion for Motown: "Through some of my friends of color, I discovered R&B music . . . and I wanted to know why it . . . made me feel the way it did. And I wanted to know why Sam Cooke killed me the way he did. And why Jackie Wilson was slaying it like he did" (Moraski).

Perry moved to Los Angeles, took a job at Crystal Studios to learn the industry, and then went out in search of fame and fortune. Instead he found starvation: "I was eating a lot of pork and beans. [A] dentist said . . . I ought to have all my teeth out" (Flans 21). His meager earnings from the few bands he played with did little more than cover the rent. But Perry was gaining experience and honing his craft. One band even made him an international singer: "[W]e ended up in Quebec and Montreal. . . . [W]e stayed at the Chateau Frontenac and my big thrill [there] was having onion soup" (Lafon). In 1976 Perry linked up with former Vanilla Fudge bassist Tim Bogert in a short-lived group called Pieces ("5 Mind-Blowing Facts"; see also Adams; "Steve Perry"; Fordis; Lafon; Rattle; Speake; Wosahla). One of Perry's bands with promise, Alien Project, had a meeting with a record label to negotiate a contract, but that fell through when the bassist died in a motorcycle crash. Dejected, Perry went home to work on his stepfather's turkey farm, and that's when he got the call from Journey's manager (Barton; Campbell; Dolan; Flans; Frolik; "Growing Up with Steve Perry"; Leogrande; Lufkin; Lundahl; MacDonald; "Perry Likes 'Journey' Success"; "Rockline Spotlights"; Secher; Speake; "Steve Perry: He's Loyal to Journey"; Stix; Wosahla).

Steve Perry walked onto the stage of San Francisco's Old Waldorf as Journey's official lead singer on Friday, 30 September 1977, adding his soaring tenor vocal to the band for the first of six appearances over three nights. The *San Francisco Chronicle* noted that the "most dramatic development . . . is the band's overall vocal sound . . . a thoroughly professional and worthy vocal mix" (Selvin, "Journey" 46). Before long they were selling out arenas (Kociela).

The 1978 *Infinity* tour, Perry's first with the band, occurred at the height of a conversion of the United States from a production economy to a service economy—not exactly a recession, but a displacement, especially in factory towns in the North. The youngsters in the audience sought release from their daily fears as the opportunities that had brought their parents a middle-class lifestyle seemed to be moving elsewhere. "People create their sense of identity through their musical choices," writes music historian Dewar MacLeod, "choosing social groups and gathering together in audiences of collective identity" (4). Journey provided a muscular, bass-driven rock that appealed to macho types, building in these men a "tribal allegiance" to the band (Gioia 25, 412).

The addition of Steve Perry placed Journey on the path to success, but it was another personnel change three years later that launched the band into superstardom. That's when founding organist Gregg Rolie, the voice of Santana's "Black Magic Woman," left a successful rock band for the second time in his career (Selvin, Liner notes).

His replacement was Jonathan Cain, a Chicago-born songwriter who had spent a decade like so many other talented musicians trying—and failing—to achieve success in an unforgiving industry (Cain 114–15). After years of disappointment, including an album (*Windy City Breakdown*) produced by Bob Dylan's former manager, Albert Grossman (Chapple and Garofalo 132–33; Cain 113–30), he got a gig with the British band the Babys, opening for Journey—and in December 1980 became Gregg Rolie's replacement in the headlining act (Cain 149). What followed were three hugely successful albums and world tours (Selvin, Liner notes; "'Gold & Platinum' [Journey]"). With each new recording, including his massively successful 1984 solo album, Steve Perry sounded more and more like the Motown and R&B artists he had so long admired (*Captured*; *Frontiers*; *Street Talk*; *Raised on Radio*).

* * *

Several Journey songs demonstrate the influence of Motown and R&B. The group's first bona fide top-twenty hit, "Lovin,' Touchin,' Squeezin,'" is a good example. This blues tune by Steve Perry includes lyrics, inspired by Sam Cooke's "Nothing Can Change This Love," that develop a story about a jilted lover who predicts that the former partner will soon likewise be jilted—a familiar theme in R&B. "Walks Like a Lady," also by Perry, is a jazz-blues take on Bob Dylan's "Just Like a Woman." When he performed it live, Perry inserted a typical African-American schoolyard chant: "Put your hand on your hip/Let your backbone slip" (*Departure*; *Captured*). "Someday Soon," by Perry, Gregg Rolie, and Neal Schon, features a call-and-response (a musical form rooted in the Negro[3] spiritual tradition). "Line of Fire," by Perry and Schon, is a hard rocker about a violent love triangle involving "Frankie," "Suzie," and "Stevie," inspired by Sam Cooke's take on the traditional Negro blues number "Frankie and Johnny." This one, like Cooke's version, involves a gunshot, in this case a sound effect provided by drummer Steve Smith.

After a concert in Chicago, Journey recorded a show for the program *Soundstage*, broadcast by PBS affiliate WTTW. It being Chicago, the band could not resist inviting some local blues players onstage—surely a treat for drummer Aynsley Dunbar, no stranger to the blues, and for Neal Schon, who cut his teeth listening to Aretha Franklin and styled himself a young Eric Clapton. One at a time, the band welcomed onstage four Chicago Blues legends: Jerry Portnoy on harmonica; Luther Allison and Albert King on guitar; and Pinetop Perkins on piano. All but Portnoy were African-American. As Allison, King, and Schon traded guitar solos, followed by Gregg Rolie taking turns on keyboards with Perkins, the nearly all-white audience seemed to realize that they were witnessing blues history. Allison, King, and Perkins had learned the blues in the juke joints of the Mississippi Delta, were literally born on cotton plantations in the sharecropping south, and had been part of the Great Migration to Chicago. They knew the blues because they had lived the blues—the original blues. They were trotted out not because Journey had suddenly decided to become an interracial blues band but because they lent credibility to

Journey's claim to the *evolution* of the blues—an evolution available, for the most part, only to white artists (Hamilton). Appropriately reverential, the white members of the band gave their guests each their turn. But when their turn was over, it was back to rock ("Journey—PBS Soundstage [1978]" video).

The band's willingness to explore their African-American musical roots is also found in their guest stint on the *King Biscuit Flower Hour* radio show (*Best of the Biscuit*). Joined by African Americans Annie Sampson and Jo Baker of Stoneground, the white Tom Johnston of the Doobie Brothers, and the interracial Tower of Power horn section, Journey performed eight Motown and blues classics. After Junior Walker's "(I'm a) Road Runner," Sampson and Baker brought in the (white) Everly Brothers' oft-covered "Love Hurts," with Perry adding a verse from the (white) Righteous Brothers' "Unchained Melody" to the song's middle (and almost making it fit). Then they performed the exciting "Hold On I'm Comin'," by Sam & Dave (Black), and the (Black) Impressions' inspiring gospel number "People Get Ready." At Johnston's suggestion, they added "Show Me," by Joe Tex (Black), and the Robert Johnson (Black) blues classic "Crossroads," with vocal duties shared by Johnston, Gregg Rolie, and Steve Perry, and a downright gleeful guitar line. Rolie enjoyed singing Albert King's "Born Under a Bad Sign," and Perry soared in his take on Sam Cooke's "Good Times" (King and Cooke were both Black) ("Journey 'King Biscuit'" video; Selvin, "New Howls"; Selvin, "Rock Journey"). Sadly, the episode never aired; such celebrations of interracial popular music did not jibe with Journey's developing appeal to rust-belt white youth, who now wanted their Black-originating music sanitized by white artists.

* * *

To what extent did Steve Perry's success, and the good fortune of his bandmates, result from the cultural appropriation of Black musical traditions? In other words, as a white singer who favored historically Black musical styles, could his performances be described as a sort of modern minstrelsy? Historian Michael Bertrand defines four characteristics of white artists engaged in cultural appropriation: (1) a lack of "popularity with African-American audiences and record buyers"; (2) lack of interest "in black culture before endeavoring to become a professional performer"; (3) the failure to exercise "power, right, or motivation to question music business practices or those who devised them" to make the music industry more racially equitable; and (4) limited musical taste, focused exclusively on the African-American styles (199). Unlike Elvis, for whom none of these characteristics proved true on analysis (Bertrand 199), Steve Perry met three of the four.

First, although his talent was respected by Black musical powerhouses Quincy Jones and Lionel Richie, as evidenced by their decision to include him in U.S.A. for Africa in 1985 and to invite him to submit an original song for inclusion on the *We Are the World* album ("If Only for the Moment, Girl"; see Edwards; Mansfield), Perry had little purchase in the African-American listening community, either as a member of Journey or as a solo artist (Cucu 90–91). Second, Perry never publicly demonstrated any interest in Black culture outside of his admiration for Black performers (at least there appear to be no sources for such interest). Third, almost as soon as he had achieved a modicum of power in the industry, Perry began questioning and

challenging "business practices [and] those who devised them." He engineered the firing of Journey producer Roy Thomas Baker (Bishop), steered the band toward a more soulful sound (*Raised on Radio*, 1986), took control of its parent corporation (Trademark License Agreement), and then became a record producer himself (*Raised on Radio*). But the closest he ever came to using this power to help African-American musical professionals achieve parity in the industry was his token hiring of Randy Jackson to play bass on one album and an ensuing tour (Selvin, Liner notes). Even then, however, Perry did not offer Jackson any of the lucrative benefits of full membership in the band (Everett). Only the fourth category fails to match, as Perry's musical tastes were eclectic and not limited to the Motown and soul he so often favored; he also liked big band and doo-wop (Cucu 16–23), for instance. In sum, while it might be unfair to label it as virtual blackface, Perry's work clearly fell within the realm of cultural appropriation.

In addition to providing their listeners with a culturally appropriated sound, Journey's success also capitalized on nostalgia. With inflation, unemployment, and crime at unusually high levels, the fans who idolized Journey yearned for a mythical past, ignoring (or unaware of) the fact that the 1950s were only a golden age for nonethnic white suburban men (Gioia 422; Gaines; Williams).

During the 1980s—the decade of Journey's greatest popularity—this nostalgia accelerated. The election of a grandfatherly Hollywood actor to the American presidency dovetailed with a nostalgia-driven resurgence of 1950s-style rock and roll epitomized by the Stray Cats and, from Journey's own cutting-edge San Francisco, Huey Lewis and the News. Other artists dabbled successfully in the concept: Bryan Adams had a hit in 1985 with "Summer of '69"; Billy Joel recorded a 1950s-style album in 1983, *An Innocent Man*, which earned the piano man a Grammy nomination ("Nominees"). Even actual doo-wop acts had new music on the radio: The Five Satins, famous for their 1956 hit "In the Still of the Night," had a 1982 hit with "Memories of Days Gone By" ("Memories of Days Gone By"). In 1985 the top-grossing film in the United States was *Back to the Future*, in which a teenager from a post-industrial California town travels to a cleaner, sunnier version of the same place—in 1955 ("Domestic Box Office"). Journey's superstardom was part and parcel of that trend; even Steve Perry's onstage costume—topcoat and tails—spoke to nostalgia for an earlier time.

Put another way, popular music was always about rebellion, and the rebellion of the white youth of the early 1980s was a rebellion against liberalism, a backlash against the accomplishments of the civil rights movement represented musically by Motown, Michael Jackson, and Lionel Richie: "[T]he industry … learned to package and sell rock and roll as a form of acceptable rebellion, a commodity to be consumed in youth and discarded with maturity (except in the form of harmless nostalgia played out on the dance floor)" (Hajduk 160–61).

Meanwhile, as rock critics aged, they lost touch with the interests of rock fans. "The taste of the average audience is about … it must be 13 [years old] now. And so, you produce songs that [appeal] to the twelve-, thirteen-, fourteen-year-old mind," said E.Y. Harburg, lyricist of such Depression-era hits as "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime" and "Over the Rainbow" (interview in "Always Chasin' Rainbows" video). This was borne out by a 2018 study in the *New York Times* using data from Spotify: "The most important

period for men in forming their adult tastes were [sic] the ages 13 to 16, "while" [t]he most important period for women were [sic] the ages 11 to 14" (Stephens-Davidowitz SR9).

Journey's explosive success was fueled by teenagers, who "all look like Leif Garrett," (Robertson), a white actor-singer with a blonde mullet. Their audience was "disgustingly fit teenage California girls" and "unpimpled males" (Simmons). The whiteness was unspoken, an expected norm. In 1981, these were the very youngest of the baby boomers and the oldest members of Generation X. They knew what they liked, and what they liked was Journey.

But the critics were mostly male, older boomers, born between 1945 and 1955, in their late twenties and early thirties at the time. For them, Journey's #1 album *Escape* compared poorly to the music of their youth—Hendrix, Joplin, the Doors. To add insult to injury, by the time that album was released, Journey had purged its two members most closely associated with that "classical" era of rock—Aynsley Dunbar, who had played with Zappa and Bowie, and Gregg Rolie, an original member of Santana. For this cardinal sin —and the propensity of the band and its management to seek profit in unusual places— some critics labeled Journey "corporate rock," "immature," and other unhappy monikers (Considine; Goldberg). They were neither right nor wrong; they just had a different perspective from the fans.

* * *

Steve Perry walked away from Journey in 1987, and, except for a brief reunion in 1996, the band moved on without him. The following years were characterized by one failed attempt after another to restore the group to superstardom (Daniels 113–17; Cain 239–63). While popular culture fetishized hits sung by their former lead singer, the "new" Journey did the yeoman's work, year after year, literally touring their replacement singer's voice away (Greene; "Journey Controversy"; Maes).

Without planning to or desiring it, Journey—like many rock acts—had entered a period in their history where they were best described as a "nostalgia act." Their core fan base was now in or near middle age and mostly set in their tastes. The music was still a part of their identities, but it represented their youth. They wanted to hear it on the radio (usually on "oldies" or "classic rock" stations) and were willing to revisit that feeling by seeing the band in concert. But, by and large, they had no interest in the band's new output (Gioia 422–24).

I identify three categories of nostalgia acts. The first category, that of the "one-hit wonder" or band with only one or two very recognizable hits, defines musical acts past their prime that are relegated to state fairs or to playing as opening acts for the bigger draws. An anecdote from *The Simpsons* demonstrates this phenomenon. The character Homer Simpson goes to see the Canadian band Bachman—Turner Overdrive at a fairground and, once the show starts, demands that they play their hit "Taking Care of Business"—and then, during the song, that they skip the verses and just play the chorus. Later, after the band has played their other major hit, "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet," Homer demands they play the same song—again ("Saddlesore Galactica" episode).

The second category of nostalgia act is that of continued success with new music. Usually it is singer-songwriters who comprise this category, like Jackson Browne or Bruce Springsteen, but sometimes whole bands fit the bill. The best example of these is Aerosmith, who followed their "superstar" years (and 1980s comeback) with occasional

tours and albums that continued to sell well and influence current musical tastes ("'Gold & Platinum' [Aerosmith]"). Journey arguably might have fit into this category if Steve Perry had stayed with the band—or if they had agreed to do a reunion album together every five years or so.

Instead, by touring and recording without Steve Perry, Journey fell into a third category. They had so many hits—the band called them "the dirty dozen"—that they could perform a full set, night after night, and draw enough of a crowd to be headliners, even without their longtime lead singer. But they wouldn't see significant album sales without him and could not influence the popular zeitgeist as they once did. "There was just one thing the 7,141 people who turned out Tuesday night at the Blue Cross Arena at the Community War Memorial didn't want to hear," opined one journalist after a Journey, Styx, and REO Speedwagon concert in 2003—"[o]ne of the guys in these bands saying, 'And now here's something from our new album.' No, when you're 45 years old and paying $56.50 for a ticket, time stopped in 1979, when Styx's 'Babe' was at the top of the charts" (Spevak). Or in 1981, when it was Journey's "Open Arms."

There was an upside. Thanks to nostalgia, the tours finally became lucrative ("2018 Pollstar"). In the 1970s, Journey lost money on the road, using their concerts to promote their albums, to build up a following that would go to the record store the morning after the show ("Journey Takes You"). They cut corners by sleeping on buses and underwrote costs with sponsorships by companies like Budweiser beer (Selvin, "Rock Journey"). In the 1980s, when the albums were largely selling themselves thanks to radio airplay, the tours broke even, making their profit on merchandise sales, which manager Herbie Herbert carefully controlled (Specter; McNeice; McDonough). By the 2000s, with the advent of the Internet, even the merch was selling itself: Fans could buy T-shirts, mugs, and mouse pads directly from the band's website. Now the purpose of the tours was to make money, and ticket prices reflected that ("2018 Pollstar").

Journey's continued popularity in recent decades, both in MP3 downloads and on the de facto segregated "heritage" tour circuit, has been no less instructive in how Black musical styles continue to influence white musical tastes. The use of "Don't Stop Believin'" on *The Sopranos* is but one example. Albeit fictional, Tony Soprano represents the white suburban teenager of the 1970s, all grown-up and no less anxious; the violent plotline stands in for the continuing fears of a generation moving from Reagan's "Morning in America" to Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" (Lynch; Staley).

In 2007, Journey hired a relatively unknown Filipino singer, Arnel Pineda, as their new lead vocalist. From his first performance with the band, Pineda added a youthful intensity to a group that had been written off as dinosaurs. His presence added thousands of new fans from the immigrant community in the United States, and when they played the Philippines for the first time in 2008, they discovered a new fan base (*Don't Stop Believin'* film; Childers; Pappademas).

Pineda's presence in Journey—and the increase in immigrants and other people of color in attendance—did not go unnoticed by the county-fair folks and other predominantly white fans. "I think he should be from here," said one, drinking beer with her friends before a show. Asked if she thought that sentiment racist, she defensively replied "not at all, but it would just be better if he was" (*Don't Stop Believin'* film). Online, the animus was more open. Pineda's wife "was so freaked out with all these racist comments

that she told [him] to bring a bulletproof vest" (Appleford). One writer called it "an undercurrent of racism" (Liberatore).

But when a 2020 band feud resulted in the removal of two longtime members, guitarist Neal Schon replaced them with African-American drummer (and Aretha Franklin's former producer) Narada Michael Walden and bassist Randy Jackson, an A&R executive and a longtime judge on the popular Fox television program *American Idol* (Abbey, "Narada"; Abbey, "Narada's"; Blomstedt; "Randy Jackson" video; "Narada Michael Walden"; Kreps; Makowski; Mendelsohn; Neale; Selvin, "Randy Jackson"; Wingfield; Wright; Zulaica). Although it proved temporary, Journey was transformed into a majority-minority group. And, in a sign of changing times, the personnel change produced no discernible racist response among the fans. Racism in America is not eradicated, and, for far too many of us, Black lives still don't matter. But, for now, rock groups may have found a way to embrace their interracial heritage more openly.

The success of America's one-time most-popular band, as we have seen, had everything to do with race. Lynyrd Skynyrd, the Allman Brothers, and even Fleetwood Mac turned toward country rock in the 1970s. But white American audiences have always hungered for Black music, whether consciously or unconsciously. When Journey added a Motown-influenced lead singer, they focused instead on cultural appropriation. In a modern twist on minstrelsy without blackface, Journey delivered a "safe" form of Black music to the white audiences who craved it.

For nearly fifty years, Journey has produced music rooted in the changing currents of white rock. At first it was progressive rock. Then, with Steve Perry and Jonathan Cain, they produced a Motown-influenced soft rock that spoke to a youthful nostalgia. They continue to do so as a full-blown nostalgia act that speaks to the concerns of middle-aged white Boomers and Gen Xers. Their fans can't stop believin' in cultural appropriation.

Notes

1. Perry is the child of Portuguese immigrants but does not identify as Latino.
2. While I follow standard conventions referring to individuals by last name, to do so with Carlos Santana would disingenuously confuse the man with the band that bore his surname. To account for this I am, albeit unconventionally, referring to him by his given name.
3. My use of the word "Negro" is not to describe *people* (Black or African-American being more appropriate in that case) but historically rooted musical styles and/or literary genres.

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