

# Being Petty: A Tribute To a Legend

On Monday, October 2nd, we lost the heart and soul of American rock and roll. Tom Petty's career and influence spanned decades, leaving hit after hit in their wake. Everyone knows a Petty song. Everyone has a favorite. There are innumerable articles out right now highlighting his music, his career, and his legacy. We won't pretend that our take is the best you will read, but we do hope that for those that loved his music, it will serve as another opportunity to reminisce and reflect on an artist that helped create the soundtrack for many of our lives.

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## **Josh Crowe**

The American spirit is vast. It's hard to nail down. Many artists have tried to do so and several have failed. Some who have succeeded are Bruce Springsteen with *Thunder Road* or Bob Seger with *Against the Wind*.

For me, Tom Petty's *Free Fallin'* also gets the job done. From the first chord to the fade out, I'm swept away to the life of a Southern California teen in the 80's. It's broad and simple. It's full of tension. The girl is good and the boy is bad. How many 80's romance movies played this situation out for us? Yet, Petty made us feel it again.

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## **Mike Lytle**

When thinking of which Tom Petty song to pick it is very easy to fall back on the old joke that I can't narrow it down to one song since I celebrate his entire catalog. In this case, it is not a joke though. *Free Fallin'*, *Runnin' Down a Dream*, *I Won't Back Down*, *The Waiting*, he has so many great songs that

it is very difficult to pick one to pay tribute to. So instead of choosing a song, I am going with a Tom Petty movie. That movie is none other than the Kevin Costner classic *The Postman*. For those too young to remember (or those who have tried to forget) Kevin Costner decided in the mid to late 90s to focus his acting energies on three hour, post-apocalyptic epics. *Waterworld* received the most attention because it cost so much to make and went so far over budget, but *The Postman* is the better movie. A primary reason for this is Tom Petty and his role as Bridge City Mayor. He actually plays himself in the movie, but since it is set in a world that no longer cares about famous rock stars he is content to inspire people in other ways. Whether it is for his singing, songwriting, guitar playing, or acting, Tom Petty will be missed.

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### **Gowdy Cannon**

Chances are you have heard *American Girl* not just on the radio but on any number of TV shows or movies, usually during a climax of a story about a woman triumphing. Americans have heard it in everything from sitcoms like *Scrubs* and *Parks and Rec* to movies you'd expect like *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and movies you wouldn't like *Silence of the Lambs*. I read even *The Handmade's Tale* recently made use of it. We can't get enough of this song to help tell our stories. Musically it makes you want to cut loose and "dance all night," even if you can't dance or normally don't (like me). But it's deeper than that, which is why Hollywood keeps calling and why it's been covered dozens of times the last 40 years. It's so versatile it can tell any number of stories but I find it quite appropriate that the song didn't catch on for a while but later became a mega-hit. Because that is probably the story we love best. The story of Ben Carson and his library card, of Kurt Warner and his grocery bagging, of America being the underdog in its revolution. *American Girl* is, like the song's author, as American as apple pie and absolutely what is great

about this country.

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### **Phill Lytle**

I don't have a singular story to share – no transcendent moment when a Tom Petty song knocked me over and captured my heart. What I do have is decades of unreserved love for *Learning To Fly*. From the opening guitar to the triumphant, drum-laced bridge, the song is a revelation every time I hear it. It's a simple melody, played with precision and care, wonderfully mixed to bring out the most of each instrument. The guitar solo is reserved and understated, fitting perfectly with the song's laid-back vibe. Petty's voice sounds as confident as ever, singing about living, failing, and trying again. It is a song with redemption echoing in every corner and it is as beautiful a song as I will ever hear.

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### **David Lytle**

A couple weeks ago I was listing to Tom Petty and talking to my wife about him. I made the comment that Tom Petty was my go to if I wanted something that made me feel good. I never get tired of the sound of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. Their sound makes a bad day bearable and a good day great. Then Petty died, and while the loss of a legend saddened me, I am grateful that the magic of recording allows the music to live on. For my dime, *Runnin' Down a Dream* is the quintessential feel-good song of an artist that never failed to make me feel better. It describes driving a car with music on and presumably the windows down. It's about life on the road encountering both the rain and the sunshine. The guitar riff "drives" the song so effectively that just hearing the guitar makes you want to jump in a car. Let's celebrate Tom Petty driving down the freeway as we hope for "something good waitin' down this road."

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# **BREAKING: New App Unveiled To Eradicate Devil Music**

A powerhouse consortium including Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Bob Jones University, has unveiled a new app to combat the proliferation of worldly music. The app, "Sacred Fire" ingeniously updates the well-loved tradition of youth groups burning their secular music for a modern, digital age.

"It has become clear, to those of us with eyes to see, that our society is racing to Hell in record time." Robertson said at the recent unveiling. "We looked for possible causes and the answer was so obvious we were surprised we had not realized it sooner. Once music went digital, with iTunes and the like, churches lost the ability to hold good, old-fashioned CD burnings. We knew that something had to be done. So we got together and we created "Sacred Fire."

According to the press release for "Sacred Fire", when launched, the app appears as a large bonfire on your device's screen. From there, you simply drag and drop the offending songs or albums into the fire and they are removed from your music library forever.

Robertson continued, "We wanted to make sure the process was simple but also with a tactile sense of achievement. Back in the day, when you threw a record, cassette tape, or a CD into the fire, you would see it melt and crack and you could hear it pop. We knew we needed to re-create that as much as possible. Instead of sound effects like crackling and popping, we have added words of encouragement taken directly from the pages of the Bible."

A few examples were given by Robertson during the announcement

for these words of encouragement. “For instance, if you were to drop a song like Bon Jovi’s ‘Living on a Prayer’ you would get the basic, ‘Praise the Lord!’ response, since that song is only moderately offensive.” Robertson added. “A song like Beyoncé’s ‘Sorry’ would get a stronger response, possibly ‘Well done good and faithful servant.’”

For the most evil and demonic songs, “Sacred Fire” includes the ultimate response to give the user the strongest sense of accomplishment and righteousness. “There are certain songs and artists that are so far beyond the pale that we just had to acknowledge that and reward those holy young believers in their spiritual walk. When you toss a song like Madonna’s “Like a Prayer” or Hozier’s ‘Take Me to Church” into the fire, the screen will go black and you will hear weeping and gnashing of teeth. That is extremely satisfying. We believe it is important to communicate how truly evil certain music is. AC/DC’s entire catalog gets that response.”

The app will be available for download on both IOS and Android devices in the spring of 2018.

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## [500 Words or Less Reviews:](#) [Hammock – Mysterium](#)

I have long loved the music of *Hammock*, the band comprised of guitarists and sound-scapers, Marc Byrd and Andrew Thompson. Perhaps one day I will write a detailed exploration of their entire discography. For now, I will say this: I love the mood and energy they create with their particular brand of post-rock ambient music. They craft sound and emotion by using guitars, pedals, piano, cello, and various other tools. For

the uninitiated, their music floats and sinks; built around droning guitars. You will not hear them on your local radio station. I do not know enough about what goes into making an album like this, I just know that whatever they do, they do it better than most.

*Mysterium*, their eighth full-length album, continues *Hammock's* mastery of their chosen art form. In some ways, it is their biggest album to date – with choral and orchestra components used to complement the already stunning melodies they play with guitar and piano. In other ways, it is their most personal and vulnerable album. They composed and dedicated the album to Clark Kern, Marc Byrd's nephew, who died in 2016 after fighting with a rare disease for his entire life. This creates an album full of arresting melodies tenderly worked into subdued and serene numbers.

Music, at its very core, is supposed to make us feel. When we listen to a song, we should sense what the artists felt when they sculpted it from air. If an artist can do that well, they will capture our imaginations and our deepest emotions. *Hammock* does that and does it in remarkable fashion. *Mysterium* is built on converging layers of grief, sadness, and hope. These mostly wordless songs speak volumes about life, death, and the struggle each of us face when we experience a profound loss. *Hammock* is so gifted at writing emotionally resonant music they rarely need words to communicate, and on this album, they take that a step further by using silence to capture the full weight of grief and reverence.

The songs are ethereal, poignant, and sacred. At times as I listened, it felt as if the sadness of a particular song would completely overwhelm me. Then the song would introduce a new melody and the entire mood would change. What had been a grief so deep it ached became a hope so powerful it soared. I have loved *Hammock's* music from the first note I heard, mostly because their music speaks to both parts of my life – the here and now and the yet to come. *Hammock* has one hand digging deep

into the soil of the human condition while the other is reaching, grasping, straining for the heavens above.

If these descriptions do not explain what their music sounds like, I am truly sorry. I do not have the skills as a writer to explain my reaction to their music. I just know I long for spiritual nourishment of this kind and *Mysterium* is a veritable feast for my soul.

Listen to the album below or click this link to buy it – [Mysterium](#).

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## [500 Words or Less Reviews: Look What Taylor Swift Made Me Do](#)

I am not a fan of Taylor Swift. Never have been. Her only album I have been able to tolerate is *1989*. I feel that disclaimer is necessary from the outset.

Unless you live under a rock, you probably noticed that Taylor released a new song a few days ago. It is titled, “Look What You Made Me Do.” The song is awful – filled with all the poorest elements of modern pop music. However, looking beyond the melody and the beat, the song is emblematic of the very worst of our society. It is the quintessential anthem of our narcissistic and victim culture. If there was any doubt before, we can now crown Taylor Swift as the Queen Victim of our age.

The song is a list of the times Taylor feels she has been slighted, wronged, offended, judged, criticized, and blamed.

It is whiny and screechy and so inwardly focused that it is difficult to take any of it seriously. There isn't a whiff of self-awareness. No trace of self-reflection. She even sees herself as a Christ figure in the music video – arms outstretched with a crucifix behind her. In Taylor's fantasy world, there are many who have lied about her and stabbed her in the back, so hers is a righteous anger. It's hard to hear all this self-pity coming from a 27-year-old woman who is worth nearly \$300 million. The end result of the song is to declare that due to all the horrible, unfair, mean stuff that has been said about or done to her, that the old Taylor Swift is dead and she has become someone else – someone angry and vengeful. The problem with that declaration is that Taylor Swift has been a "mean girl" for a long time. You only have to listen to her older albums to see the spitefulness with which she has always operated. But in her warped view, she is the put-upon victim, the innocent, the martyr. In her mind, her enemies forced her to create and release this song and now that she has taken all she can, she is ready to get down in the mud with all those "liars and dirty, dirty cheats of the world." So, we have that to look forward to...

We are a society of self-aggrandizers, self-promoters, and self-congratulators who in our minds can do no wrong, bear no responsibility for any of our actions, and are in a constant state of victimization. Everyone is out to get us. So if no one is on our side, then we have to do everything we can to get ours. We are "me monsters" of the highest order. And society will praise us for that. Society will champion us until it has no more use for us and then it will destroy us. That is the end that is awaiting Taylor Swift. And based on the reception to her new single, it is an end that could be here sooner than she expects.

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# Eternity In Our Hearts By Way of Arcade Fire's No Cars Go

Ten years ago today, *Arcade Fire* released the final single from their groundbreaking sophomore release, *Neon Bible*. The song? *No Cars Go*. While the album was thematically dark and despairing, *No Cars Go*, the penultimate track, was full of life, energy, and hope. That is not meant as a critique of either the album or the song. I love both. But the contrast was clear. It was unmistakable for those that had ears to hear.

While this is in no way meant to be comprehensive, a little background information is probably needed about *Arcade Fire* for the conclusions I draw to have any lasting value. *Arcade Fire* is an indie rock band from Montreal, Quebec. They have released five studio albums. Their sound is eclectic, mixing classic rock and roll with electronica, disco, indie, and boisterous anthems. Thematically, they infuse their songs with a “voice crying out in the wilderness” sentiment. There is a prophetic urgency to their lyrics, decrying greed, religion, and any other aspect of modernity they find troublesome. With piercing clarity and exacting specificity, they denounce society’s constant grasping for more, more, more. As often as not, their barbs are aimed at themselves as much as anyone else.

When I reviewed the album *Neon Bible* over ten years ago, I used words like haunting, damning, anxious, angry, and hypnotic to describe what I heard. I was so taken by that album, I poured out 2,000 words in an attempt to grapple with it. Listening to it again more recently, I stand by my initial reaction. The album is dark and brooding. It’s angry and accusatory. It’s full of rage, confusion, and hopelessness. It’s within that context that I fell in love with *No Cars Go*.

I love everything that comes before *No Cars Go on Neon Bible*. I love the questions. I love the razor sharp criticism of America, Christianity, and the ungodly union of faith and money. I love how pointed it all is. It is powerful and challenging. At its best, it is convicting and a conduit to self reflection and change. Yet after nine songs the band makes a dramatic turn. Instead of leaving the listener hopeless, they opt to throw caution to the wind and dive head first into a song that in some ways is the most hopeful and optimistic song I have ever heard.

Sometimes, one song can make all the difference in the world. Perhaps because they wrote *No Cars Go* a few years earlier, there is less despair and more optimism. Perhaps, deep down, they still believed that somewhere, some time, some place, things can and will be better than they are now. Lyrically, *No Cars Go* is deceptively simple – It almost feels silly and childish. And because of that, I could see some listeners just overlooking the spiritual depth of this song. The song begins whimsically; playfully. When the band yells “Hey!” it would be easy to think they are just having fun; that this song is not meant to be taken as seriously as everything that has come before. I believe that line should be seen as a passionate attempt to get our attention.

The crux of the song is that they know a special place where no cars can go. It is that simple lyrically. No planes, trains, automobiles, submarines, or spaceships can get to this place. You can almost see it “*between the click of the light and the start of the dream*” and they urgently invite everyone to come with them. When the triumphant denouement begins, the music swirls, elevating the song to a transcendent level. Lead singer, Win Butler exclaims, “*little babies – women and children – old folks – Let’s Go!*” The accordion and keyboard flow in and around each other. The drums methodically build to the climax. When the horns come in, and the bass takes that rhythm the drums started to a more

intense level, it takes your breath away. Then, they unleash heaven. We “*don’t know where we’re going,*” but we have to go. They tap into something so human, so urgent, so eternal. A choir of singers joins the band and the music swells to a crescendo of pure spiritual longing. Hyperbole, probably. Do I believe every word, absolutely.

*No Cars Go* is further proof that God has placed “eternity in our hearts” as image bearers. We long for more. We long for Eden, for paradise, for the Kingdom. Most of us don’t even realize it. I’m not convinced *Arcade Fire* even understands this longing they are desperate to see realized. Yet God will make His name known and His truth heard even through the voices of fallen, broken, unbelieving vessels.

Ten years ago today, *Arcade Fire* released *No Cars Go*. I am thankful that *Arcade Fire* is seeking, asking, and knocking. They still haven’t found what they are looking for, but it is clear that their questions are pointed in the right direction. Though their vision is clouded and veiled, it points to a place where God will live among his people. A place where He will wipe every tear from our eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things will be gone forever. He will make all things new in this place where no cars go.

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## [Sometimes He Calms the Sea](#)

African-American pastor and songwriter of the past century, Charles Tindley, used a common metaphor of the time to reference the trials, tribulations, dangers, and snares of the Christian life: “When the storms of life are raging, stand by

me...when the world is tossing me like a ship upon the sea, thou who rulest wind and water, stand by me.”[1. “Stand By Me” Charles A. Tindley]

Another song writer-poet expressed similar sentiments: “Jesus Savior, pilot me, over life’s tempestuous sea, unknown waves before me roll, hiding rocks and treacherous shoal, wondrous sovereign of the sea, Jesus Savior, pilot me.”[2. “Jesus, Savior Pilot Me” Edward Hopper]

Songwriter Scott Krippayne, echoed these thoughts in a song he wrote in 1995:

*All who sail the sea of faith  
Find out before too long  
How quickly blue skies can grow dark  
And gentle winds grow strong  
Suddenly fear is like white water  
Pounding on the soul  
Still we sail on knowing  
That our Lord is in control  
Sometimes He calms the storm  
With a whispered peace be still  
He can settle any sea  
But it doesn’t mean He will  
Sometimes He holds us close  
And lets the wind and waves go wild  
Sometimes He calms the storm  
And other times He calms His child“*[3. “Sometimes He Calms the Storm” Scott Krippayne]

Traveling by boat or ship, or being out on the ocean, rivers, or lakes was a dangerous thing for many centuries, since ancient times. Storms could arise without notice, and the wind, strong waves, thunder, and lightning menaced travelers, and could capsize a ship and cause many deaths. This has been symbolic of trouble in the Christian life. Storms symbolize illness and disease, financial disasters, broken

relationships, and anything else in life that threatens us, either physically or emotionally. Can God not step in and save the day? Can he not send a miracle our way?

In Mark 4, the disciples on the Sea of Galilee found themselves caught in a sudden storm, helpless and in grave danger, while Jesus was asleep in the boat. They woke him, frightened out of their wits, and He stood, extended His hand, rebuked the wind, and said "peace, be still." Immediately the storm ended. Instantly. There was a "great calm." Jesus then rebuked his followers for their lack of faith. Sure, He can calm storms. He's God.

A few years later, Paul was traveling as a prisoner to Rome, on board a ship in the Mediterranean Sea. Suddenly, a Euroclydon, a powerful, cyclone-type wind arose, and for the next two weeks the ship was tossed and battered until all hope of survival was gone. But suddenly Paul appeared and said to all on board with him: "The God whose I am, and whom I serve, has appeared to me." He gave Paul the peace he needed, and the assurance that all would be well (Acts 27:23). But they had to ride out the storm and suffer shipwreck. Life's like that sometimes.

Yet another song repeats for us the same truth:

*Sometimes He calms the storm sometimes He calms me  
Sometimes the storm still rages on but I feel the sweetest  
peace  
It's such a joy to know that my Lord knows just what I need  
Sometimes He calms the storm sometimes He calms me*[4. "He Calms me" sung by the McKameys]

Here are some lessons we can learn.

God is sovereign over every storm life brings our way. He is capable of doing the miraculous; healing, provision, removing obstacles, and certainly doesn't mind His child asking for those things. He may not do what we wish He would, but He

always, always, always, will be with us, and will speak peace to our heart if we call upon Him. "Therefore, we will not fear..." (Psalm 46:2) At the end of the day, He will "get us to the other side."

Here's the point. We all face storms. God can miraculously still them, and sometimes will, but often we will have to go through them. However, even in the storm He is with us, can speak peace to our heart. The loss of our beautiful daughter-in-law two years ago – my health challenges the past few years – standing with friends and family during severe trials. I'm so glad He is there. The song by *Casting Crowns*, "Praise You in This Storm," states it beautifully:

*And I'll praise you in this storm*

*And I will lift my hands*

*That you are who you are*

*No matter where I am*

*And every tear I've cried*

*You hold in your hand*

*You never left my side*

*And though my heart is torn*

*I will praise you in this storm*[5. Praise You in This Storm"]

Mark Hall and Bernie Herms (Casting Crowns)]

Prayer: Father, even now be with your dear children who are caught in one of life's raging storms, whatever it might be. Please calm the storm, according to your will, or please calm them, and assure them of your love and presence. In the powerful name of Christ, Amen.

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# [Listen Now! A Rambling Ever On Spotify Playlist](#)

Seven members of the REO staff helped put this playlist together. The theme is place, as in geographical location. Each song mentions a place or places. It could be a city, state, country, or region. Sometimes the places in these songs are integral to the meaning of the songs themselves. Other times they may be mentioned, almost in passing, to provide added depth and texture to the song choices. Popular music of all styles and genres seems to be fascinated with this theme. There are separate Wikipedia pages dedicated to all the songs about cities like New York, New Orleans, and Nashville. For the most part we stayed away from many of the obvious choices and picked songs that resonated with us personally whether they are popular or not. That doesn't mean you won't immediately recognize some of the song choices. As with all our playlists we limited it to 30 or so songs selected by a handful of people. There are literally thousands and thousands of songs we could have chosen, so we know we left out plenty of good stuff. Let us know what some of your choices would have been.

One final note, this is the REO playlist debut of our very own Gowdy Cannon. We hope to hear more from him in the future!

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[Fanny Crosby: The 19th](#)

# Century Wonder Woman

I admit that I have not seen the new Wonder Woman movie yet, but I have seen a viral video in which it inspired a brave young lass to dress up...as something...and attempt all manner of swordplay with a toy sword and awkward acrobatics. I have also read lots of reviews of Wonder Woman; you can read Phill Lytle's excellent review right [here](#). While I fully intend to see Wonder Wonder, all the hubbub has put me in mind of an actual and probably far greater Wonder Woman of days gone by. While Wonder Woman herself is a daughter of Zeus, I am referring to a daughter of the one true God in heaven. I refer to no other than one of the greatest hymnists who has ever lived: Fanny Crosby. Fanny is mainly known by history as a great blind hymnist, but it might be that she would not want to be remembered for only her hymn writing. She regarded this as only part of her life and ministry, but certainly not all of it. And she was right to think that; her life and ministry included much more. During her life in addition to her status as The Queen of Gospel Music, she would serve as a teacher of the blind, a much in demand public speaker, and a full time minister among the homeless.

## **The Early Years**

Crosby was born on March 24, 1820 in Southeast Putnam County, New York, in a small community called Gayville. About six weeks after she was born Crosby caught a bad cold. In the absence of the community doctor, a well-meaning neighbor stepped in claiming to have medical knowledge and know-how. He applied hot poultices (wet washcloths) to Fanny's eyes in a misguided attempt to draw out the infection. The man succeeded only in permanently blinding her. (At this time her parents didn't know it was permanent and fully believed her sight would return after a time.)

When Fanny was almost one her father John Crosby died. That is



when Fanny and her mother Mercy moved in with Fanny's grandmother, Eunice Crosby. Eunice Crosby would do much of the mothering of Fanny until she was five. During this time she did everything she could to strengthen her granddaughter's powers of memory and to help her see the world without eyes. As an adult, Fanny would recall how "Grandma...brought the Bible to me, and me to the Bible. The stories of the Holy Book came from her lips and entered my heart and took deep root there" (This is My Story, This is My Song, Fanny Crosby).

### **The Formative Years**

When Fanny was about five her mother took her to New York to see Dr. Valentine Mott, a famous eye doctor. After inspecting Fanny, he informed Mrs. Crosby her daughter would never see again. This devastated Mrs. Crosby. However, Fanny herself was secretly relieved. She would never be able to see her blindness as anything but a gift from God.

Shortly after this disappointing visit Fanny's mother acquired a job in North Salem, Westchester County just south of Gayville. They still lived close enough to Gayville that Eunice Crosby was able to visit several times a week, but when Fanny was eight or nine they moved again after her mother landed a job in Ridgefield, Connecticut. This was much too far away for her grandmother to come visit all the time.

During these years, God had another kind caretaker took Eunice Crosby's place in Fanny's spiritual and mental education. We know this goodly individual only as Mrs. Hawley. Under Mrs. Hawley's care by ten years of age Fanny could recite by memory the Pentateuch, Proverbs, the four Gospels, numerous poems, and portions of a number of books. Her mental library would only grow as she got older. Eventually, she did not have to have someone read the Bible to her; she could just recite any passage she wanted. Fanny never thought this an extraordinary feat. She sincerely believed that a blind person could do everything a person with sight could do—and sometimes even

better. In one of her autobiographies she says, "It has always been my favorite theory that the blind can accomplish nearly everything that may be done by those who can see. Do not think that those deprived of physical vision are shut out from the best that earth has to offer her children" (Fanny Crosby, *Memories of Eighty Years*).

From an early age she was developing an extraordinarily descriptive mind and a keen writing ability. She wrote her very first poem when she was eight. When she was in her teens she submitted works of poetry to a nearby paper. This paper was published by the soon to be famous P.T. Barnum. It was also during these formative Ridgefield years that Fanny's desire for formal education began to grow.

### **The Student Years**

In 1834 Fanny and her mom left Ridgefield and returned to Westchester County. In November of that same year they first saw an advertisement for the New York Institution for the Blind. On March 3, 1835, Fanny set off for New York with a traveling companion to enter the institute. After enrolling in and beginning attendance of the school, Crosby quickly became known among the faculty, staff, and student body for her poetry. It was during these early student years that she first became well respected among the literary community of New York and in demand for her poetry skills.

A superintendent of the school named Mr. Jones foresaw the danger of this still young student being ruined by vanity from all the high praise. He therefore cautioned her against letting this vanity get the best of her. At the same time he commanded her to not write poetry for the next three months. He did this partly to temper her growing vanity and partly to test her commitment to writing poetry. After proving herself (and learning to temper her vanity) she was encouraged to write to her heart's content. This is when a literary mentor named Hamilton Murray stepped in. Murray was a member of the

Board of Managers of the institution who had great writing sensibilities and skill. He took her under his wing and taught her to write better. With his guidance, Crosby was able to branch out into other areas of writing. For instance, with his help she put her mind to writing poetry for campaigns and other political events.

### **The Teaching Years**

In 1843, Fanny graduated from the institute. During that same year she became a teacher there. It was also during that same year that her health began to decline somewhat. Nevertheless, she still took a number of students to on planned trip to Washington D.C. While there, she recited some of her poetry to the politicians. This trip to Washington was such a success that Crosby would later take a second group of students to the U.S. capitol.

By 1845, she was gradually getting more and more into song lyric writing. During that year a man named George F. Roots came to the school to teach music. In 1853, the two composed a cantata called "The Flower Queen."

Fanny was also began publishing books of poetry during these teaching years. In 1844 she published her first official book of poems: "The Blind Girl and Other Poems." This book also contained her very first hymn which she called "An Evening Hymn." In 1851, she would publish another book of poetry called "Monterey and Other Poems."

Some really big events happened in Fanny's life in between these two books, in 1848 and 1849, the land was stricken by cholera. Like thousands throughout the country, many of the students died. It was so bad that during August of 1848, Crosby was ordered to retire to the country so she too would not get sick. This was not an uncommon practice at this time; many city dwellers were departing the city to avoid the close quarters that fostered the disease. She did retire to the country, and it was not only a salvation for her physical

self; it was a life changer for her spiritual self as well. During her time away from the institution, she received a full knowledge of Jesus Christ. This was not something that had just happened all of a sudden. Several years earlier in 1845 she had first met her spiritual mentor, Theodore Camp. He was instrumental in bringing her to Jesus on November 20, 1850 at a revival at the Broadway Methodist Tabernacle.

### **The Latter Years**

Fanny met her future husband, Alexander Van Alstyne when he was a student at the institution in 1855. (He was 11 years younger than her.) After he graduated from school, he became a teacher and became engaged to Fanny. Three years later the couple resigned and very shortly thereafter got married.

Little is known regarding their married life, but there are three facts that are pretty clear: First, although very amicable and still doing some things together, they lived apart and had separate lives for the majority of their married life. Second, a few years after they were married they had a daughter who only lived for less than a day. Third, they would remain married until he died on July 18, 1902.

In 1858, the year she had resigned from teaching and gotten married, the stage of her hymnist career was set. During this year Fanny published "A Wreath of Columbia's Flowers." This would be her final book of poems before starting to write hymns. This next phase of her writing career was instigated in December 1863 after she was asked to write a hymn for the Dutch Reformed Church. She did so well on this project that an arrangement was made for her to meet the famous hymnist William B. Bradbury on February 2 of the next year. A historic years-long collaboration ensued. It was not long afterward that she became known to evangelists and pastors on both sides of the Atlantic as Aunt Fanny and the Queen of Gospel Music. Many of these ministers commonly used her work in altar calls. The world famous evangelistic team Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey

utilized her songs in this way throughout the 1870s and onward. The greatness of Fanny's hymns comes from their ability to be understood and to touch the lives of ordinary people.

By the time she died in 1915, Fanny would pen at least 9,000 hymns. Although she mostly signed them with her given name, she wrote a lot using pseudonyms. She is believed to have used almost 200.

It was also during these years of growing worldwide fame that Fanny became a much in demand public speaker at churches and charitable organizations. It is said that she was exceptionally gifted at this role.

### **The Last Years**

By the 1880s, Fanny was both living and working in the slums. Her work in the missions here gave her the opportunity to evangelize common people on a personal basis.

At the same time she kept busy with her writing life. During these last years, she would write two autobiographies: "Fanny Crosby's Life-Story, By Herself" in 1903 (out of print) and "Memories of Eighty Years" (retitled Fanny J. Crosby: An Autobiography) in 1906.

Fanny died at the age of 95 sometime during the night between February 11 and 12, 1915. On her tombstone are the words, "She hath done what she could" (from Mark 14:8). Of the thousands of hymns Fanny penned, most have been forgotten, but those used in churches around the globe throughout the decades have been priceless tools in touching lives for Jesus and continue to be so. Fanny Crosby was a true Wonder Woman for the cause of Christ—a Wonder Woman for the ages.

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# “Cry, Baby, Cry! Make Your Mother Sigh!”

I am such a sap. There are days when almost every song I hear makes me emotional. Not every song, mind you, just the majority of them. And to further clarify, these are songs I am choosing to listen to, not songs that I just happen to hear on the radio, though those will sometimes hit me right in the feels as well. My daytime work routine is pretty simple: while I labor away over various things that do not interest me in the least, I listen to music. I listen to music in the car, to and from work. I listen to music at home, as often as I can. Sometimes it's difficult to listen to music when I want to because it's just one more level of noise competing against three energetic boys. Nevertheless, I persist.

Back to me crying. I see that I never actually said that music makes me cry, so I should probably clarify. I don't usually cry while listening to music. I get a little misty eyed and my eyes might even well up with tears. This is not an everyday sort of thing, but on the days it happens, I try to evaluate my response. “Why am I getting emotional listening to the Thor soundtrack?” “Did I really just cry listening to “Africa” by Toto?”

When the first song hits me hard, I figure I just really need to hear that particular song at that particular point in time – that happens every now and then to me. But then, the next song gets me even more worked up, and it's not one of the usual suspects that consistently break me down. It's some random song that I enjoy, but never respond to in an emotional way. (Case in point: “Africa” by Toto.)

So, on the days when music is turning me into a big man baby, what does it mean? Is there a deeper significance to it? I have no idea. Perhaps I am just really tired and everything is

going to hit me harder on those days. Perhaps I am more attuned to the emotional truth of each song and that is causing me to have a stronger reaction. Perhaps I should try to spiritualize this as much as possible and find out what it is about those songs that is causing me to act like all the women I know that watch *This Is Us*.

More than likely, this is all pretty easy to figure out. I am a sap. I cry at movies and TV shows that don't even cause my wife to blink. I cried the other night watching *Guardians of the Galaxy*. Leave me alone! If you don't cry when Groot sacrifices himself, you have no soul! I remember watching *Bridge to Terabithia* with my boys years ago and I was a mess at the end. I was so worked up by the film, that it sort of embarrassed me. I didn't want my boys to see me ugly crying over a kid's film. So yes, I am a sap and I cry. Maybe it's just that simple. I'm not sure though.

By now, you are probably asking yourself, "Why did he write this?" And more importantly, "Why did he decide to share this?" Two very good questions and I don't have very good answers for either of them. My gut reaction to all this is simple: On those days when what I listen to is provoking a strong emotional response, I think it's because sometimes, I need to feel things deeply. Most days I just coast through life. Not in a bad way. I'm not disengaged or anything. I think most people have very ordinary days most of the time. We don't get emotionally worked up most days. At least I don't, even though I am more apt to do that than others. I think on the days of strong emotion, I am being gently prodded to keep my heart open and a bit broken. Not just for my own good either. I think it's on days like these that if I allow song to do what they are capable of doing; I become more in tune with things of a spiritual nature. Maybe my emotional spells will allow me to be more empathetic with a friend or coworker, simply because my heart has already been laid bare. Perhaps, this is God's way of telling me to stop being so careful with

my feelings – to stop building walls around me. If my defenses are down and my heart is open, I am more likely to notice the needs of others. I am more likely to feel the needs of others and respond in a God-honoring way.[2. Galatians 6:2 and Philippians 2:4] Maybe these days are meant to stretch me – to grow me.

Or maybe I'm just a sap.

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## [Listen Now! A Rambling Ever On Spotify Playlist](#)

Regular readers know that our previous published playlists have been based around a particular theme. Check out our [water](#) and [color](#) playlists. For this playlist we are doing something a little bit different. Instead of theme this playlist is based on a musical instrument. Each song prominently features what is perhaps the greatest of all musical instruments – the piano. Since its invention a little over 300 years ago the piano has made its way into virtually every style of music. Over time the number of musical genres has exploded, but the piano has been a constant. Equally at home in both secular and sacred music these 88 keys produce some of the most beautiful sounds heard this side of heaven. As you listen to this playlist try not to dwell on the fact that if you had paid more attention during piano lessons as a kid you too could have made it on an REO playlist!

For this list we had seven contributors that picked four songs each. Enjoy.