

20 Minute Loop

2017 Biography & Late Night Musings

The Name... Often people ask us what "20 Minute Loop" means, and because it alludes to something a bit obscure, it might behoove us to provide a little explanation. On private jets, the length of time on a digital cockpit voice recorder (CVR) that elapses before the recording begins to overlap and erase itself—an audio snake eating its tail—is twenty minutes. On commercial aircraft, the length of time on the CVR is thirty minutes. This way, there will always be roughly half an hour of cockpit conversation recorded in the unfortunate event of a crash. What we say before we die is very important to those who survive us. Famous last words are always famous, and everyone hopes that the dying will say something pithy and conciliatory, something that might suggest closure. (As if closure were ever truly possible...) In the case of the CVR, investigators hope a revelation will emerge, a key to the crash; they carry the indestructible box—the "black box" that is more often orange—away from the twisted metal and carnage like a sacred reliquary. Too often, however, the pilots' voices betray nothing but their terminal proficiency mixed with a touch of animal fear and a heavy dose of frustration for not being able to control the flying beast. Often they are eerily calm, transmitting their imminent doom to air traffic controllers who helplessly watch a green blip disappear on a black screen.

This digital loop, this endless recording that awaits a disaster, is part of our mortal expectancy. Michel Montaigne wrote: "we prepare ourselves against the preparations of death." He probably wasn't thinking of a jumbo jet when he wrote in the early modern era, but we can enjoy larger meanings, we hope, without feeling too ambitious. We are not scared of dying; we're scared of its anticipation. A young man from another band asked us (before he had heard our music) if we used a lot of tape loops and samples, as our name implies. The simple answer is: No. But our sets usually run about half an hour, if not shorter, and this, of course, is the same length of time found on the CVR, and we do play the same songs, with some variation, from show to show and set to set, so maybe we do perform a kind of endless loop or sample of music that the audience rarely notices. Pop music, after all, is nothing if not repetition awaiting a disaster. Repetition is pleasurable and deep, just like the three-year-old who wants to read the same Maurice Sendak book over and over and over again, ritualizing the page-turning, the anticipation of wild things lurking in the paper leaves, mouthing the words along with the parent who feels anxious having to read this damned book one more time, only to cherish and preserve the battered copy once the child has grown older and moves on to richer repetitions that don't include the parent. So, like everything else, 20 Minute Loop refers to the lovely repetition of life that can never quite escape its expectancy of death. Aren't you glad you asked?... Did you ask?

The People in the Band, A Short History. Greg Giles formed the band in 1997. For a year, he considered various names that never stuck: With God on the Dog Team Trail, Pierre Bon Bon, Kill Whitey!, PSA Flight 182. From the first recording in 1997, Greg began collaborating with Kelly Atkins, who would come to form with him the core of 20 Minute Loop.

(Nils Erickson joined in 2001, while various drummers and bassists alternately joined and fled until Adam Cunha and Mike Romano took their places, assuming the mantle of the rhythm section. Nils also became something of a de facto producer for our album "Famous People Marry Famous People" (2008), since he is the token music-store-employee-cum-guitar-teacher-cum-audiophile-with-carefully-organized-CD-and-vinyl-collection-cum-home-recording-nut-cum-man-with-a-plan-and-a-Hello-Kitty-grilled-cheese-iron. We all secretly despise his wealth of knowledge (but we enjoy tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwiches with Hello Kitty's face seared into the bread). I think we've talked about Nils Erickson quite enough.)

A Few Albums, A Few Shows. 20 Minute Loop's first self-titled album appeared in 1999, followed by *Decline of Day* in September 2001 (an auspicious month that was, no?). That September, we performed in Los Angeles at the Knitting Factory with the Sleepytime Gorilla Museum, exactly three days after you-know-what, and on the way to our friend's living room floor after the show, we saw the streets thronged with overwrought citizens in red, white, and blue, holding signs, screaming and cheering, while "Born in the USA" blasted from someone's crappy sound system. Later that month, we had our CD release party at Bottom of the Hill in San Francisco. On TV monitors near the front of the stage we showed footage of Bollywood musicals, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, and Dumbo, which, we believe, crystallized our own feelings regarding the ugly turn of events (and corresponded vaguely to our half-baked Hindu theme).

In January 2005, we released our third full-length album, *Yawn + House = Explosion*. Greg's mother has called it "probably the most seminal third release since Lou Reed's *Berlin*," although Greg doesn't really know what she's talking about. It doesn't sound anything like Lou Reed. If you want less biased accolades, please Google the album, and you will find much praise. In 2008, we created a fourth full-length (eventually penned "Famous People Marry Famous People" after many drunken rounds of Roshambo; Greg wanted to call it—what else?—"Kill Whitey!", with the title logo designed like a Krispy Kreme sign. No one else agreed.)

Cue 2010 and the seemingly permanent shelving of the band due to impossible scheduling, newborn children and brain-rotting graduate studies, only to be revived a few years later for a reunion show at Noise Pop 2012.

Wait, You're Back? Well, yes, in a manner of speaking... A few short years later, Greg and Kelly got their dander in a whirl and did a few "please-just-let-us-sing-in-your-living room" type concerts with Kevin Seal on piano. 20ML was resuscitated yet again! All this hullabaloo inspired producer Jim Greer to make a live recording of the trio at "Ninth Street Opus" studios in Berkeley for our 2017 release "Songs Praising the Mutant Race". Bands may die, but songs don't.

Which brings us The 20th Anniversary of Greg & Kelly Singing Together (1997-2017), an achievement marked not only by gray hair, ringing ears and creaky knees, but a shit-ton of songs, stories and shows. The years trudging by saw each of them married (and at and in each other's weddings), PhD dissertations, Greg's move to Portland, Kelly's midnight induction into the fold of Kitka Women's Vocal Ensemble (an Eastern European a cappella powerhouse choir bursting eardrums all over the globe for nearly 40 years), her work with Jonathan Segel (Camper Van Beethoven) for their upcoming release "Superfluity", and now one more 20ML album (on vinyl, no less!) for posterity.

Overall, we have gotten many fine reviews for our albums and performances, and expect many more. Because we are a nifty band. Having toured the U.S. and played the incredible Noise Pop Music Festival several times (including this year: 2017), we have yearned to expand our adventures, but alas, thus far, having to book all our own shows means that we suffer and slave for a Monday night at the Whirligig in Boontville. In addition, we have a band fund that is not dissimilar to the metal receptacle the Salvation Army puts on a sidewalk every Christmas. We did get played on Chilean and Ukrainian radio stations, which means a lot to Kelly, in particular, because she is half-Chilean and half-Ukrainian... which accounts for her red hair... (She fancies herself ethnically exotic; we think she's mostly German and British.) Let us know if you have any other questions regarding our pedigree, our failures and victories, our personal tastes, our collection of china figurine mermaids making love to porpoise...

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PS. So yes, we have some new recordings that will hopefully appease those of you who have wondered where we have been. All of which is by way of apologizing for our several years' absence:

Greg, guitarist and vocalist, left his apartment one afternoon with his friend Jezebel only to find that there was a strange man sitting behind the wheel of her Toyota. He had broken the rear window to get inside and in spite of their best efforts to curse and lean against the sides and elbow the remaining windows, the thief managed to start the car and make his escape, in the process crushing Jezebel's favorite stick of lip gloss. The thief was caught several days later with a can of mace and a stun gun and Jezebel's favorite handwoven Mexican blanket full of stolen stereo equipment, trying to steal another car using the car he had already stolen from her (which, incidentally, had expired tags).

Kelly, vocalist and keyboardist... well, her health continues to reward her with nothing, and now, because of swelling in her jaw, she can't seem to get her mouth shut. The bone spurs discovered on her temples two months ago have grown into nubs and now appear to be incipient antlers. The soft red fur on her lower back has spread to her shoulders, and the webbing between her toes and fingers has hardened into some sort of dark cartilaginous substance. She also has a snout, which might account for the trouble with her jaw. Her boyfriend Dominickio has found her once or twice in the garden chewing the hydrangeas and bougainvillea.