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Mix It Up, Vol. 2

Curating the ultimate queer compilation

Just like the wimpy Democratic Party, the Human Rights Campaign could use an image makeover.

Frequently criticized for putting its D.C. backslapping ahead of a more radical queer agenda, HRC seems to be getting its groove back. This summer it sponsored the True Colors Tour with the hip lineup of Cyndi Lauper, Debbie Harry, Erasure, Rufus Wainwright, Cazwell, The Gossip, The Dresden Dolls and The Cliks featuring trans frontman Lucas Silveira. The accompanying compilation CD is equally impressive, offering a snapshot of today's hottest queer and queer-friendly talent.

The last time I reviewed an HRC benefit disc, I wasn't nearly as impressed, so I compiled my own anthology of queer portrayals in popular music, both positive and negative ["Mix It Up," March 4, 2005]. Since then I've come across a number of songs that I should've included, so here's a sequel playlist, presented chronologically:

1. "A Boy Named Sue." Johnny Cash experiences some major personal growth in this classic recorded in 1969, the same year as the Stonewall Riots. The title character initially seeks bloody revenge on his deadbeat dad for giving him a girl's name, but he changes his tune after hearing his father's explanation at a saloon in Gatlinburg, Tenn.: "I knew I wouldn't be there to help you along, so I give ya that name and I said goodbye, and I knew you'd have to get tough or die. It's that name that helped to make you strong."

2. "Walk on the Wild Side." Just three years later, Lou Reed introduced us to a woman named Holly hitchhiking from Miami to New York City: "Plucked her eyebrows on the way, shaved her legs and then he was a she."

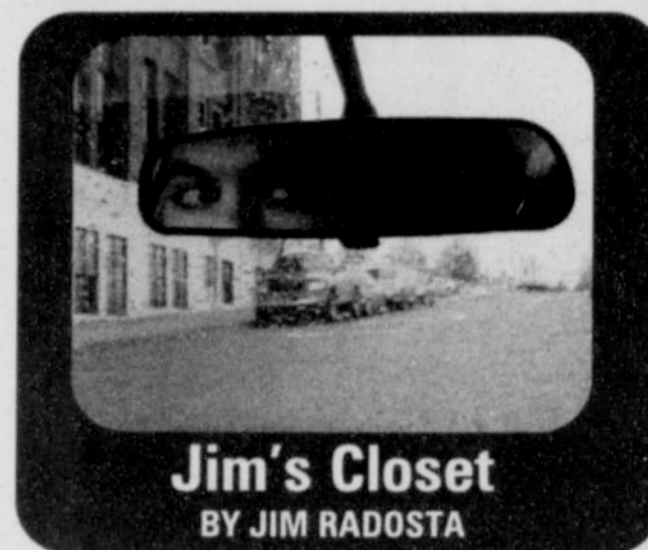
3. "The Killing of Georgie, Pt. 1 & 2." At the height of his popularity, Rod Stewart bravely recorded this epic 1976 single about a gay friend who gets kicked out of his house, moves to Manhat-

tan, becomes the toast of Broadway and is murdered by a New Jersey gang. The sad story ends on a hopeful note: "Never wait or hesitate. Get in, kid, before it's too late. You may never get another chance, 'cos youth's a mask, but it don't last. Live it long and live it fast."

4. "I Was Born This Way." The Rev. Carl Bean was way, way ahead of his time when he recorded this proud song in 1977: "You laugh at me and you criticize 'cause I'm happy, carefree and gay.... Now I won't judge you—don't you judge me. We're all the way nature meant us to be."

5. "Hideaway." Erasure offered words of encouragement in this 1987 tale about a boy who moves far from home after being rejected by his parents for coming out of the closet: "Don't be afraid, love will mend your broken wing, time will slip away, learn to be brave." (Do we detect a theme here?)

6. "Funky Cold Medina." Long before Eddie Murphy made headlines for his tranny chasing—and setting the stage for *The Crying Game*—Tone-Loc bragged in 1989 about serving his love potion to a woman named Sheena, only to find out that she was a he: "So I threw him out—I don't fool



around with no Oscar Meyer wiener. You must be sure that the girl is pure for the Funky Cold Medina." (To clarify further, he emphatically added: "Ain't no plans with a man! This is the '80s, and I'm down with the ladies.")

7. "In This Life." Madonna's best album, 1992's *Erotica*, is mostly remembered for its sexual frankness, but it also includes this touching ballad about a 23-year-old gay friend who died of AIDS: "Why should he be treated differently? Shouldn't matter who you choose to love.... Is there a lesson I'm supposed to learn? In this case, ignorance is not bliss."

8. "Chicks and Dicks." Damn, we need to take a break from all this heavy stuff. Danish duo Junior Senior broke stereotypes in 2003 with their non-traditional appearance—the twink boy is straight, and the bear boy is gay. The latter sings bluntly: "I'm a man man, I don't need no chick.... Girls think I'm hot, but I think they're not."

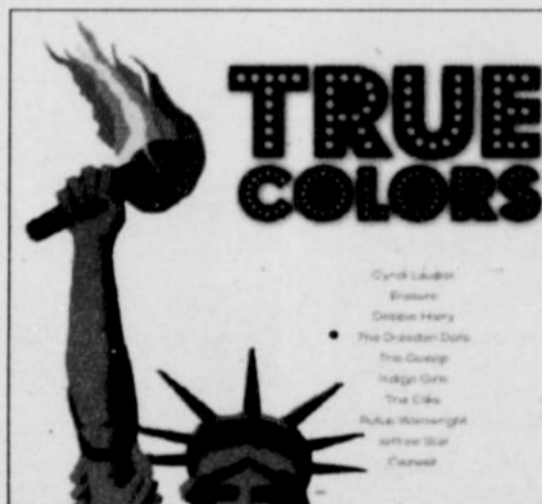
9. "Ménage à Trois." Let's give a shout out to our bi/poly brothers with this 2003 tune from Alcazar. Even though it's about a horny couple inviting a third person to have sex with them, the Swedish pop group sings with Abba-esque innocence: "Would you like to come to our ménage à trois? There's room for one

more body in our boudoir! Would you care to try a little un, deux, trois? Everyone will get a chance to be a star!"

10. "Flawless (Go to the City)." George Michael made up for all those lost years in the closet with this 2004 gay anthem encouraging rural boys to get the heck out of Dodge: "You're beautiful, and you know it. You're wasted here.... in this small town.... I think you know that you are more than just some fucked-up piece of ass."

11. "All Over Your Face." Yeah, white rapper Cazwell's 2006 debut single isn't specifically queer, just dirty. But any hit that mentions giz, bukkake and KY is worth including to show how far we've cum—er, come.

12. "Billy Brown." Mika created an instant queer classic with this 2007 sing-along ditty: "Oh Billy Brown had lived an ordinary life—two kids, a dog and a cautionary wife. While it was all going accordingly to plan, then Billy Brown fell in love with another man." **JO**



Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. Write to jim@justout.com.