

HAVE YOU HEARD THIS?

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In searching for the best music of 2007, I reviewed the picks provided by Billboard, Spin, Rolling Stone, MetaCritic, Variety, CNet, NPR, Amazon, and several national newspapers. The verdict? I didn't like anything on any of their lists. So who's picking this stuff? Cambodian refugees? Gitmo detainees? The homeless? I like to think I know a few things about music; that I know a hip beat when I smell it.

Everyone likes to be unique (read: cool) with their music choices. Recommend good music to someone who's never heard it and they'll suddenly perceive you as a sophisticated person with refined cultural tastes; as if you've opened for them some metaphysical door to the possibility of new experiences. Those in positions of persuasion become mad with influence (because they work for Spin or RS), and start recommending overly-eclectic music (read: garbage), simply to demonstrate that they have access to it. They've heard what you haven't.

"Oooh, it's so metaphorically postmodern-deconstructionist because it doesn't even sound like music."

Yes, and not coincidentally, nobody can stand listening to it.

I had a friend who listened to obscure underground hip-hop before it became popular. I caught a whiff of her playlist, and after she heard me listening to her bands, the snob locked me out of her musical preferences completely. Later, I overheard some jazz music and asked her about it, and she replied, "Just some random African jazz." Really? The song had no title? The band was anonymous? Jeez.

For the record, your ability to sort through piles of Indie trash does not make you "cool." It is an indicator that different parts of the country are exposed to different things. One of the drawbacks of mass production is that certain geographic areas become demographically stereotyped, resulting in a narrowing of tastes into what becomes known as "mainstream." Sometimes good art gets cut out, purely because of the costs of production, shipping or advertising. More importantly, it is important to recognize that in a greater sense, our perspectives on life are directly connected our respective locations in it.

More to the point, if you want exposure to Cunninlynguists or Andre Nickatina in Santa Fe, Phoenix, Dallas, Houston, Oklahoma City or the Bible Belt, hopefully you have an

enlightened friend because you're not going to hear them on the radio. What's worse, even if you have a friend in a culture-rich city like San Francisco or New York, the atmosphere in such places tends to de-generate people into snobs who won't share their sophisticated tastes with you.

They've worked hard to gain access to informed opinions, develop a certain sophistication, and achieve an elusive, elevated social status. Now, entrusted as gatekeepers for the rest of us plebians, what do they do? They lock us out.

It's a dichotomous reverse-evolution: Those who grow rich in social and cultural knowledge, who are immersed in it, tend to denigrate and even despise the individuals that are part of it. In my opinion, the joke is on YOU, music snob, because at the heart of your aggrandized egotism is a cruel and ironic self-loathing that prevents you from getting over your own ego. Personally, I'm glad I can't relate to that.

By the way, I've got something that you **MUST** hear ...