

Spending the Night with Linda: Michael's Rock and Roll Posse

Last night, Tina and I saw the new Linda Ronstadt documentary, and I was completely overcome with feelings throughout the entire hour and a half. She came to light at just the right time, both because so many of her collaborators are alive and spoke straightforwardly about her, all with *carino* and respect, but also because there is a ton of footage, so we see her playing in a small folkie group in Tucson, even before The Stone Poneys days, through the present, in her living room with relatives noodling around.

Although I have all of her music—several times over, and in many formats—and have read her book in its English and Spanish editions, I still was taken to school by the rockdoc. Although she was gifted with her extraordinary voice, she works much harder than I had ever known, and several people commented on this trait, whether rehearsing old show tunes and cabaret songs with Nelson Riddle (because he arranged Sinatra, whom she adored), to practicing singing in Spanish with salsero Ruben Blades, or singing bel canto in *Pirates of Penzance*, in part because her mother love Gilbert and Sullivan. She worked hard, and her amazing vocal range was on display in country, rock, pop, light opera, folk genres, and in her last act, she drew from her youth in Tucson and sang Mexican corridos, mariachi, and popular & classic rancheras. And she excelled in all these forms, as her extensive catalogue and record sales attest. No other rock and roll woman had her own band, or was so prominent for so long. When she developed Parkinson's, inherited from her mother, it "stilled her voice," although the film does not dwell on this. However, it is the cloud that formed over her life, as she stopped singing a decade ago, and has difficulties navigating around the house and is mostly unable to travel any longer.

One can only long for her sharing her voice with today's more prominent women entertainers, such as Beyonce, Taylor Swift, Adele, or Lorde. Moviegoers get a taste of this, one off, when her induction to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame occurred in 2015, but she was too ill to travel to Brooklyn. In her place, her songs were covered by Carrie Underwood ("Different Drum"), Bonnie Raitt and Emmylou Harris ("Blue Bayou"), Sheryl Crow ("You're No Good"), and Stevie Nicks ("It's So Easy" and "When Will I Be Loved"). Glenn Frey inducted her, repaying her for having included him in her early backing band, which then morphed into The Eagles. He died the following year: <http://www.glennfreyonline.com/>. Only her singing partner Dolly Parton was missing. I was there, in tears most of the time, as I had gone across country to see her induction and to pay my own form of last respects. (I was cheered by the induction and performances of Nirvana, Yusuf Islam, and The E Street Band, among others.

But I urge you to go see her in this film on your own, and form your own judgment. I am confident you will find this film as touching and as wonderful as I did. I have been cheered that she will be traveling to DC to be honored by the Kennedy Center, always a great show. And remember the Ken Burns country music series, debuting on PBS stations this weekend.

As I mentioned recently, I am in the final stages of releasing the new year of my NPR show, and as it happens, Linda figures in several of them. I am doing something here that I have not done before—giving all of you a preview of one of my favorite Classes of this new crop, which I hope you will enjoy. I am even including the music clippings that Kevin Otero, my KANW producer and crime partner, will use to fill out the 5 minutes. I hope you will enjoy this, and that it will remind you to listen to the show: www.lawofrockandroll.com. Please do not pass this copyrighted material to others.

"Rockonomics" and the Business Savvy of Rock and Rollers, Vol. 3 (Class 75)

I have used the brilliant work of the late economics professor Alan B. Krueger several times, drawing from his early articles, written when he was the Chair of President Obama's Council of Economic Advisors. The earlier work was very clever, and Professor Krueger had an excellent narrative style, found interesting facts—often by using unusual data or gathering his data from sources, and powerful insights, based upon his application of economic theory to the entertainment business. In 2019, He published his last book, just after his untimely

death, *Rockonomics, A Backstage Tour of What the Music Industry Can Teach Us About Economics and Life*. As a reading assignment for my Class, I will move us through the entire book, over the next few years, chapter by chapter. As I have read and now re-read this book, nearly 300 pages, not bound by too many tables or references, I appreciate all the more his erudition fashioned for laypeople. He wants to transform the “dismal science” into a tool for better understanding how economics forces affect all of us, using entertainment examples and cases. [Sam Cooke, “(What a) Wonderful World,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4GLAKEjU4w>]*Kevin—please use lyrics, below

First, he set out his organizing principles, including his theory of teaching and learning: “In my career, I have found...that we learn best not from abstract principles or equations but from stories. And music is all about telling stories.” As soon as I read his foundational teaching principle, I realized my own teaching experience, since I was a Freshman Composition teacher at Ohio State, beginning in 1972, through my almost-40 years career of teaching to law students and lawyers, also depends heavily upon stories, whether carefully reading legal cases, statutes, and regulations, but also trying to forge narratives: why the result flows from a series of understandings to persuading others to see my view and engage me in a genuine exchange. I knew I had found a kindred soul, and was grateful he was engaging his readers in my field, entertainment law.

As he carefully explained the deep and broad research he had undertaken to engage rock and roll and the entire music business, he brought me to a halt when he said he had interviewed the Cuban-American singer Gloria Estefan, whom he characterized—or mischaracterized—as what he termed “the most successful crossover artist of all time,” and this p. 3 judgment call almost stopped me in my tracks. Of course, authors need room to breathe, and I told myself that he was new to the field, so he obviously did not know that my beloved Linda Ronstadt is not only the accomplished and significant woman rock and roller (noting in a mental footnote that Aretha Franklin was technically a soul and gospel singer). Estefan is a wonderful singer, who migrated from her native Spanish songs with the Miami Sound Machine, to a successful solo career, predominantly in English. [Gloria Estefan, “Conga” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54ItEmCnP80>] Linda Ronstadt not only excelled in rock and roll, light opera, show tunes, and country genres, but late in her career, she crossed over to her native Mexican songs, most notably in the breakthrough album “Canciones de Mi Padre,” (Songs of My Father), and several other Spanish language albums, including mariachi and other nuanced Latin songs styles. Now, Professor Krueger, THAT is a crossover, and I wish I had met him to argue the point. [Linda Ronstadt, “Tú Solo Tú,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZfpEEik1so>]

And I loved that he had interacted with other entertainment scholars (albeit a bit thin on the law professoriate who plumb the mysteries of Intellectual Property subjects so central to music), even establishing a Music Industry Research Association—where I promise to travel to learn from such colleagues.

In my own research, gathering scholarship from many academic quarters, and as I prepare for my NPR Radio Show, I often find lines of inquiry for the shows, my regular teaching, and my specialized work with young entertainers and their lawyers—in allied fields where I am feeling my way through. So his examples of the reasons Sam Cooke, Paul McCartney, and others went into music, he notes that many indicate making a good living as their original motivation. Had he probed a bit further, he likely would have discovered getting great women (for the overwhelmingly-male profession), having your music affect and inspire others, and other non-material motivations.

He then moves into a concrete example of what he sees as obvious; He writes: “To truly understand and appreciate music, you need to understand economics.” The example he gives is that many more songs in today’s experience, involve collaboration, and due to streaming rates and metrics, the more well-known “lead” singer sings early in the music, because by doing so, listeners are more easily hooked, and this is purposeful for the rate structure. Streaming royalties only apply if the listener listens for 30 seconds. He concludes, “In other words, economic incentives of streaming are directly affecting the way songs are written, composed, and performed.” Well, maybe, but most listeners, I would bet, know who is collaborating on the song, and will listen

if they like it, not necessarily because Justin Bieber sings early on “Despacito” with Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee. [“Despacito,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJQP7kiw5Fk>]

This is the example he uses to make this complex point, but when I listened to the song, I knew well who Fonsi and Daddy were—two Puerto Rican reggaeton rappers, longtime producers and songwriters. Daddy Yankee’s bilingual song “Con Calma” sort of a light and silly ditty, had more than 1/3 Billion with a B views on YouTube and over 7 Million Likes. [“Con Calma,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiItGE3eAyQ>] To be sure, Bieber is popular with his fans, but on their song, it is a crossover for both the Latinos and the Canadian, and on the English video, the song features Bieber, while on the Spanish video, the Puerto Ricans are featured. And as best I can tell from the fast-cut video, Bieber dances a lot, but actually doesn’t appear to sing in Spanish. I believe such cultural appropriation is more explanatory here than economic rationales. [Justin Bieber-Despacito featuring Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoYgCg6i9C8>]

To end this class lesson, I summarize what he calls the Seven Keys to Rockonomics: Supply, demand, and all that jazz; Scale and non-substitutability: the two ingredients that create superstars; the power of luck; Bowie theory; Price discrimination is profitable; Costs can kill; and Money isn’t everything. Each of these deserves unpacking, and I’m not even halfway through the Preface. This book, and this engagement is worth the effort, and we have a lot of time to engage. [Lenny Kravitz, “Are You Gonna Go My Way?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LhCd1W2V0Q>]** at 1:27

This is Michael Olivas, the Rock and Roll Law Professor, reminding listeners that I only engage and quarrel with those I respect, with The Law of Rock and Roll, on KANW, your NPR station in Albuquerque, New Mexico (c) Michael A. Olivas, 2019

*Kevin, please be sure to use these lyrics:

Don't know much about geography,
Don't know much trigonometry
Don't know much about algebra,
Don't know what a slide rule is for
But I do know that one and one is two,
And if this one could be with you,
What a wonderful world this would be

Michael,
Houston, 9/14/2019