

## **Mrs. Bella Traviata and Sweet Lou Rawls: Michael's Rock and Roll Posse**

I was about 90% through a new Posse Posting, and I had a surge or something and lost the damned material. I have not been able to retrieve it, and it might have been Xfinity server issues, which rarely happens, but always does so at the worst time. I am re-starting, while I have some of it in my head. If you ever needed proof of my love of my readers, this is it. Luckily, I have my Paul Simon (and Garfunkel) playlist on, all 187 songs, 8 hours and 17 minutes worth, including about 10 versions of my favorite, For Emily, Whenever I My Find

Her: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaWrdwP1YH0>

I began by saying how I had not been able to get to this project since April, but not for lack of trying. I have tried to cutback on spam, and was almost too successful. On one fateful day, my UH IT spam filter showed 41 certified spam emails filtered out as Phish or Spam. The 41 is a record for me, by several magnitudes, as I tend to average about 3-4 daily. This treasure trove included 2 lotteries, one Irish and one Mexican, but with a Gabon link. I also got several importunings for my bank information, so they could send the fortune they were generously holding for me. I also was flattered to receive a sincere marriage offer from “Mrs. Bella Traviata, looking for a good & honorable Christian man.” She was obviously an Opera fan, and was from Kenya. Sorry, Bella, but my heart was claimed by Tina 38+ years ago, and as recently as this morning.

I also received little sympathy from Posse members—one of you who shall remain nameless—who said in effect that being overrun with emails was better than being overlooked or no longer engaged. I honestly do not feel unengaged, and just want to cut down on the many unwanted contacts and vague requests, especially for personal information. I think one of you put Donald Trump Jr on to me, as he send me a note saying he would be willing to send a personalized TikTok greeting to anyone of my choice, for a mere \$500 for a 90 second message. If any of you get such a Trump greeting (more like a Trump gift), you'll know where it came from.

I promised to deliver more entertainment-law-related materials, so I am drawing from what will be a new NPR show subject—I am hoping to reserve studio time in June, for year 9. The complicated mix of companies buying artist archives & musical rights has exploded recently, with much more money chasing a shrinking group of superstar artists whose archival rights have not yet been snapped up. The

leader, unsurprisingly, is Dylan, who sold his complete musical rights to a company for \$400M, for all the work (virtually all of which he wrote & sang, so he own most of his rights to performances, lyrics, musical scores, etc. are his to assign. Runner-up so far is Taylor Swift, who tried to buy the rights back for her for 6 LPs, but was unable to purchase them for complicated reasons, but she is so angry that she has set out to thwart the group that did buy the rights for \$300M, by competing with those versions. During the pandemic, she has begun to re-record and release the new versions, in effect driving down the market for the works she was unable to purchase. Dylan's complete works go back to the early 1960s, and he has released mre than 60 LPs, not counting live, compilation, or bootlegs. Others in the stratosphere include Neil Young, Stevie Nicks, CSN (with and without Y), Fleetwood Mac, and many more. And Dylan has set the bar for monetizing his various artistic outputs very high, having sold his various written work, lyrics copies, and memorabilia to the new Dylan Archives in Tulsa, and no week goes by where I am not offered his artwork, merchandise, bootlegs, clothing line (never thought of him as a clothes horse), and other materials. I get offers to buy Ron Wood lithographs and other Rolling Stones merch; cruises with The Moody Blues; special private film screenings with me and thousands of my best friends to a remote Abbey Road recording with The Zombies; Beatles books and mouse pads with pictures of their LP cover-art; paintings and videos from Yusuf/Cat Stevens; and dozens more. As the money pours in, there will be more of these commercial merchandizing efforts. And once NFTs begin to take off, this gift will work its way into musical merchandizing. So far, only a dozen or so have auctioned off digital materials or music or the like, but some have eye-popping prices, as do the increasing number of auction items: want to buy Dylan's childhood home(s), Neverland, or Kurt Cobain's vomit-stained cardigan from his Unplugged appearance?

I have an increasing amount of legal materials on the wills/estates/taxes of my favorites artists' deaths: Aretha, Prince, James Brown (who died over a dozen years ago, but still no resolution), Michael Jackson, Tom Petty, and others. It always astounds me when these people—litigious & complex in life—die without careful attention to their intellectual property and other ownership interests.

Every week day, I receive my favorite trade press newsletter, Best Classic Bands, which tracks od records, famous concerts or news pf rock and roll events (the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beatles breakup, with fresh details and interesting research: <http://bestclassicbands.com/classic-rock-concerts-poll-6-15-188/>; it is also free, and I have turned several others on to its treasures. It recently listed the top 100 bands

and asked readers how many we had seen in concert. As it happens, I've seen 83 (so far), several more than once. I never got to see Janis Joplin. I wish I'd seen Prince, as we had tickets but couldn't get to Las Vegas, Nevada to see him, and then he died at the age of 59. I never saw my beloved Linda Ronstadt in her heyday, but I saw her in *The Stone Poneys* and in a Gilbert & Sullivan production in Central Park (with Kevin Kline in the male lead), & attended her Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction & love her all the more. I saw Aretha 8 times, not counting the two cancellations. The most often: I saw Sweet Lou Rawls 17 times. The 100 on the list are fair calls, although in the 730+ concerts I have attended since I was 11 or 12 (starting out with Little Richard in the early 1960s, my first concert), there are many other greats not on this sort-of-arbitrary list, whose concerts I have attended over the years, sometimes several times over. Look the list over, and see how lucky you have been. Growing up in the golden age of rock and roll helps. In that and in so many ways, I have been a lucky boy, especially considering New Mexico is not a hot circuit for groups, who often choose only to play stadiums and large urban areas, where they can have a residence of a week or longer and perform before hundreds of thousands of paying customers & fans.

I end by thanking loyal Posse readers who share information, suggestions, and critiques with me—all of which I love to engage. For example, Posse Member Barry Currier suggested a book to me that has flown under my radar, Ron Brownstein's *Rock Me on the Water: 1974, the Year that Los Angeles Transformed Movies, Music, Television, and Politics*. From 1964 through about 1976, almost any major group had a classic album, and even more groups who appeared after this time, track their influences to this era. I will also be reviewing Linda Ronstadt's forthcoming book. I have read her earlier work (archived in my [www.lawofrockandroll.com](http://www.lawofrockandroll.com) website), but this promises to address her early retirement, due to her having come down with Parkinson's. I read Bruce Springsteen's book, and found myself thinking about him the other day, so I re-watched his magnificent Broadway appearance on Netflix, and found myself in tears when he talked sorrowfully about his own incomplete relationship with his father. He said it "happened too late to rewrite the page," and I knew exactly, exactly what he meant. Indeed, I am sure he was directing that remark to me, and to me alone. This is a great time for rock documentaries, biopics, concert films, and films about the music business. And they are all there for your taking.

One final tidbit: rock and roll stories are featured in most major newspapers, not even including the great trade press. The NY Times has an entertainment section

every Friday (LOUDER), that features interesting stories, obituaries, and detailed studies on artists and the business. The New Yorker likewise features great writing on entertainment and cultural issues. About 10 days ago, Dylan turned 80 (go figure), and many venues had stories—Rolling Stone and the trade press went crazy (his 80 greatest songs and covers), etc. If you are a Dylan fan, take a look at this issue: [https://www.newyorker.com/books/double-take/sunday-reading-bob-dylan-at-eighty?utm\\_source=onsite-share&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=onsite-share&utm\\_brand=the-new-yorker](https://www.newyorker.com/books/double-take/sunday-reading-bob-dylan-at-eighty?utm_source=onsite-share&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=onsite-share&utm_brand=the-new-yorker) Every New Yorker issue is great, but this is even more so—with half its pages devoted to Dylan. They have covered him since the get-go, and the Publisher loves him, as we all do. Happy 80th, Bob. I feel fortunate to have grown up with your music. And I have been nourished by your concerts, all 9 I have attended, so far.

Love and respect to all of my readers. Stay in touch and stay safe.

Michael