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In my most recent [“Ask A Music Critic” column](#), a reader wondered: It seems like pop stars, at best, have a decade or so at the top before they start to fade. But Taylor Swift shows no signs that her popularity will wane any time soon. Is that strange? Why is that? And will her popularity ever fade? I answered the first question right away: Yes, I do find Taylor Swift’s seemingly unstoppable upward career trajectory to be strange! Not because I feel like she doesn’t “deserve” her fame. (I’m not sure anyone “deserves” fame, but that’s another question.) I just find it incredible that — as the reader observed — Taylor has defied the laws of pop-star gravity to such a spectacular degree. Based on well-established precedents, she probably should have dipped by now. Instead, her stranglehold on the pop mainstream has only tightened. Think of it this way: At various points in her career she has been linked with artists such as Kanye West, John Mayer, and Katy Perry as personal/commercial rivals. Not one of them is in her league now. She gets older, but her stardom stays the same age. [Read more of my column here.](#)

-- Steven Hyden, Uproxx Cultural Critic and author of five books, most recently [Long Road: Pearl Jam And The Soundtrack Of A Generation](#)

In case you missed it...

On the latest *Indiecast* episode, Steven Hyden and Ian Cohen talk **Big Thief**, **Mitski**, and... **Post Malone**? [Listen here](#).

Tom DeLonge was mentioned during the congressional UFO hearing and he's thrilled: 'Remember that we changed the world.'

The 1975's Matty Healy had some thoughts about **Muse** changing their setlist for a Malaysian show.

Shortly before her death, **Sinéad O'Connor** spoke about writing new music in one of her final videos.

Our latest *Indie Mixtape 20 Q&A* is with **Bethany Cosentino**, who is intentional and reflective on her solo debut, *Natural Disaster*.

OPENING TRACKS



MITSKI

At the risk of sounding like a cliché, it's cool to hear a Mitski song where she's playing guitar again. I don't know if the forthcoming *The Land Is Inhospitable And So Are We* (due September 15) sounds like the new single "Bug Like An Angel," but it's a promising start.

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MJ LENDERMAN

Can I interest you in some lap steel, cowbell, a "Blowin' In The Wind" reference, a Lightning McQueen joke, and a ripping guitar solo? How about a music video loaded with muscle cars and cool mulleted guys? I'm telling you, MJ Lenderman does not miss on the new single "Rudolph."

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ANIMAL COLLECTIVE

Last year's *Time Skiffs* felt like a comeback for this resolutely weird and long-running indie institution. And given how straight music sounds right now, it was nice to welcome them back into the fold. Now comes another record, *Isn't It Now?* (due September 29), previewed with a hooky single "Soul Capturer."

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DEEP CUTS



SQUIRREL FLOWER

This Chicago-based project from singer-songwriter Ella Williams has a habit of taking introspective, folk-leaning songs and exploding them unexpectedly with fits of righteous guitar noise. Her upcoming album, *Tomorrow's Fire* (due October 13), looks to expand her sound further with contributions from MJ Lenderman and Dave Hartley (The War On Drugs.)

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SLAUGHTER BEACH, DOG

This rootsy outfit from ex-Modern Baseball member Jake Ewald has been moving toward dad-rock nirvana since launching nearly a decade ago. On their upcoming album *Crying, Laughing, Waving, Smiling* (due September 29), Ewald just might achieve it on soundscapes that layer vintage guitar and keyboard sounds in the style of mid-period Wilco.

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VINYL OF THE WEEK

**'HAND OF DOOM 1970 - 1978'
by BLACK SABBATH — BOX SET**

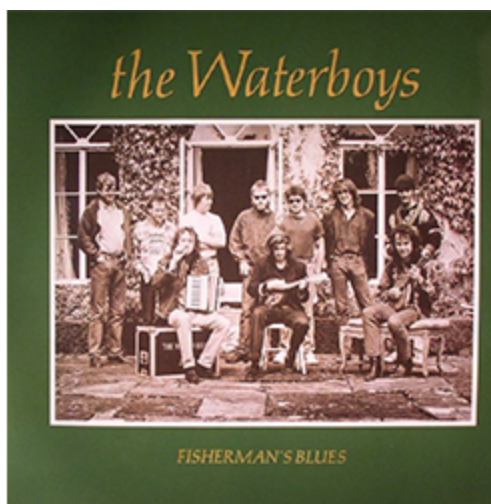


In 1968, Black Sabbath was formed by Ozzy Osbourne, Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler, and Bill Ward. Now, their songs have inspired a generation of metal music. Pick up this exclusive picture-disc box set, spanning their 1970-1978 discography.

PICK IT UP

THROWBACK

'FISHERMAN'S BLUES' by THE WATERBOYS



Back in the '80s, the Waterboys made self-described “big music” rooted in guitars and synths that would go on to influence bands like the War On Drugs. But on *Fisherman's Blues*, they pivoted hard to folk and traditional music, all while retaining the anthemic scope of their previous work.

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LINER NOTES



Indiecast Episode 148

On the latest episode of *Indiecast*, Steven and Ian dive deep into Big Thief's recent set at the Pitchfork Music Festival.

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