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## Excerpt from (She's So Heavy)

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# NON-FICTION

## EXCERPT FROM (SHE'S SO HEAVY) LAUREN KORN

### 00. Preface

“...Without a soundtrack, human interaction is meaningless.”  
Chuck Klosterman, “Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs”

I wonder now whether or not I should have attempted to explain this collection with the following preface, but it being what it is – something a bit like myself: scattered and unsure, but completely aware of itself – I will assume responsibility and believe it necessary to have done so.

Here, I have gathered together a number of essays. Introducing each essay is a list of albums that were released during the year in focus. Admittedly, these lists are long, but I've kept them as-is, pre-edit, because the mere fact that I was unable to reduce them to a more pleasing (read: lesser) number says a lot about the person (and the very stubborn writer) that I am. I struggled with the image of myself that would inevitably be projected in these lists: the obsessed girl-child that knows every Mariah Carey song by heart, the awkward adolescent that loves the boy- and girl- bands of the '90s, the twenty-something that yearns for a depth that can embody an appreciation for both Bruce Springsteen and for Dinosaur Jr.

Although this piece was intended to be one about the role music has played in my life, its final form is and will be more of a reflection on the relationships formed by music than on the music itself.

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## 01. Nineteen Eighty Eight

AC/DC – Blow Up Your Video  
Megadeth – So Far, So Good... So What!  
Robert Plant – Now & Zen  
Leonard Cohen – I'm Your Man  
Ted Nugent – If You Can't Lick 'Em... Lick 'Em  
Morrissey – Viva Hate  
The Pixies – Surfer Rosa  
Joan Jett and the Blackhearts – Up Your Alley  
Joni Mitchell – Chalk Mark in a Rainstorm  
The Talking Heads – Naked  
Tracy Chapman – Tracy Chapman  
Butthole Surfers – Hairway to Steven  
Iron Maiden – Seventh Son of a Seventh Son  
Eric Clapton – Crossroads  
Public Enemy – It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back  
Prince – Lovesexy  
Rod Stewart – Out of Order  
Van Halen – OU812  
Bob Dylan – Down in the Groove  
Hall & Oates – Ooh Yeah!

Jimmy Page – Outrider  
Iggy Pop – Instinct  
Patti Smith – Dream of Life  
Slayer – South of Heaven  
Pat Benetar – Wide Awake in Dreamland  
Salt-n-Pepa – A Salt with a Deadly Pepa  
Jane's Addiction – Nothing Shocking  
Bruce Springsteen – Chimes of Freedom  
New Kids on the Block – Hangin' Tough  
U2 – Rattle and Hum  
Ozzy Osbourne – No Rest for the Wicked  
Frank Zappa – Broadway the Hard Way  
Sonic Youth – Daydream Nation  
Dinosaur Jr. – Bug  
Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young – American Dream  
Guns 'n' Roses – G N' R Lies  
Jerry Garcia – Almost Acoustic  
My Bloody Valentine – Isn't Anything  
Social Distortion – Prison Bound  
GWAR – Hell-o

I should have been an Aries, but my mother smoked cigarettes when she was pregnant with me, so I'm a Capricorn instead. She went into labor three months before my due date – our due date – and was airlifted from Helena, Montana to Salt Lake City, Utah, the night of her older brother's New Year's Eve party. She had a C-section five hundred miles from home and celebrated the New Year in a hospital bed.

I was born January 2, 1988, at 12:59AM.

## 02. Nineteen Ninety Three

Jerry Garcia and David Grisman – Not For Kids Only  
Nirvana – In Utero  
Phish – Rift  
Dinosaur Jr. – Where You Been  
Superchunk – On the Mouth  
Ace of Base – The Sign (US Release)  
New Order – Republic  
Bad Brains – Rise

Mariah Carey – Music Box  
Tears for Fears – Elemental  
Billy Idol – Cyberpunk  
Cyndi Lauper – Hat Full of Stars  
Fugazi – In on the Kill Taker  
Bjork – Debut  
The Breeders – Last Splash  
The Melvins – Houdini

Rush – Counterparts  
Iron Maiden – A Real Dead One  
Pearl Jam – Vs.  
Kate Bush – The Red Shoes  
Wu-Tang Clan – Enter the Wu-Tang Clan (36 Chambers)  
Iggy Pop – American Caesar  
The Cure – Show  
Yo La Tengo – Painful

The Lemonheads – Come On Feel the Lemonheads  
Salt-n-Pepa – Very Necessary  
David Bowie – Black Tie, White Noise  
Tool – Undertow  
Aerosmith – Get a Grip  
Run-D.M.C. – Down with the King  
Pat Benetar – Gravity’s Rainbow

“As far as I’m concerned, the ‘90s was the best era for music ever...”

Rob Sheffield, *Love is a Mix Tape*

The basement in the house that I grew up in wasn’t renovated until I was in high school, and it being an old house meant that I spent my childhood weekends running my fingers through orange and brown shag carpeting, at eye level with wallpaper of the same color, and thinking it completely normal to want to butter the ceiling, add salt.

On one wall of the basement sat a large, wooden case made in haste by my father who needed a space to store his constantly-expanding vinyl record collection. As a five year old, this case was enormous, covering the wall in its entirety. As an adult, I realize now that there’s no way the case could have reached the length of the wall, most likely covering a third of the wall, half at best. On the adjacent wall sat the stereo system and television console. Below the television, VHS recordings of two-in-one birthday parties and pirated movies were somewhat organized by genre; below the stereo, cassette tapes lined up in rows, un-alphabetically and in plastic cases that weren’t their own.

It won’t be until I reach the awkward age of twelve that I will realize that having grown up listening to cassette tapes of Jerry Garcia singing about teddy bears picnicking was something that could (and eventually would) project me into that certain social aesthetic known as the neo-hippie; my full evolution into dreadlocks, Birkenstocks, and marijuana won’t come until two years after such a revelation.

### 03. Nineteen Ninety Four

Meat Puppets – Too High to Die  
Fugees – Blunted on Reality  
Green Day – Dookie  
Cake – Motorcade of Generosity  
Beastie Boys – “Some Old Bull Shit” and Ill Communication  
Pavement – Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain

Willie Nelson – Moonlight Becomes You  
Beck – Stereopathic Soul Manure; Mellow Gold; and One Foot in the Grave  
Cheap Trick – Woke Up with a Monster  
Elvis Costello – Brutal Youth  
Nine Inch Nails – The Downward Spiral

Insane Clown Posse – Ringmaster  
 Soundgarden – Superunknown  
 Selena – Amor Prohibido  
 Bonnie Raitt – Longing in Their Hearts  
 Proclaimers – Hit the Highway  
 Morrissey – Vauxhall and I  
 Phish – Hoist  
 Hole – Live Through This  
 Rollins Band – Weight  
 Superchunk – Foolish  
 Illmatic – Nas  
 Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds – Let Love In  
 Johnny Cash – American Recordings  
 Allman Brothers Band – Where It All Begins  
 Sonic Youth – Experimental Jet Set, Trash, and No Star  
 Violent Femmes – New Times  
 Stevie Nicks – Street Angel  
 David Byrne – David Byrne  
 Aalyiah – Age Ain't Nothin' But a Number  
 Spin Doctors – Turn It Upside Down  
 Alan Jackson – Who I Am  
 Rolling Stones – Voodoo Lounge  
 Riders in the Sky – Cowboys in Love

Elliott Smith – Roman Candle  
 NOFX – Punk in Drublic  
 Prince – Come  
 Neil Young and Crazy Horse – Sleep with Angels  
 Public Enemy – Muse Sick-n-Hour Mess Age  
 Dinosaur Jr. – Without a Sound  
 Amy Grant – House of Love  
 Usher – Usher  
 Notorious B.I.G. – Ready to Die  
 Built to Spill – There's Nothing Wrong with Love  
 Massive Attack – Protection  
 R.E.M. – Monster  
 Weird Al Yankovic – Permanent Record  
 Dave Matthews Band – Under the Table and Dreaming  
 Slayer – Divine Intervention  
 KoЯn – KoЯn  
 The Melvins – Stoner Witch  
 The Sea and Cake – The Sea and Cake  
 TLC – Crazy Sexy Cool  
 Pearl Jam – Vitalogy  
 Mary J. Blige – My Life  
 Sublime – Robbin' the Hood  
 Spoon – Nefarious

On top of my father's wooden vinyl record case sat the first of what would be numerous gag gifts: a jewel case. Inside the case, a photo of a girl-child on a swing shielding her eyes from the sun and looking searchingly at a looming figure in front of her.

From 1994 – the year KoЯn released their full-length, self-titled debut album – until 2006, the cluttered top shelf of my parents' record case became home to their schizophrenic CD collection, which included numerous copies of the seven albums had KoЯn released during that time, as well as copies of Enya, Amy Grant, Willie Nelson, The Beatles, and sound recordings of cowboy poets in Nevada.

#### 04. Nineteen Ninety Six

Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds – Murder Ballads  
 Iggy Pop – Naughty Little Doggie  
 Hanson – MMMBop  
 The Descendents – Everything Sucks  
 Neutral Milk Hotel – On Avery Island

The Cranberries – To the Faithful Departed  
 Paul Westerberg – Eventually  
 Backstreet Boys – Backstreet Boys  
 Butthole Surfers – Electriclarryland  
 The Cure – Wild Mood Swings

Brian Jonestown Massacre – Take it from the Man; Thank God For Mental Illness	Silver Jews – The Natural Bridge
Slayer – Undisputed Attitude	Marilyn Manson – Antichrist Superstar
Patti Smith – Gone Again	The Lemonheads – Car Button Cloth
LeAnn Rimes – Blue	КоЯн – Life is Peachy
Sublime – Sublime	Phish – Billy Breathes
Fiona Apple – Tidal	Wilco – Being There
A Tribe Called Quest – Beats, Rhymes, and Life	NOFX – Heavy Petting Zoo
Social Distortion – White Light, White Heat, White Trash	Ghostface Killah – Ironman
Riders in the Sky – Cowboy Songs	The Spice Girls – Spice
Bad Brains – Black Dots	Space Jam – Soundtrack from the Motion Picture
Nirvana – From the Muddy Banks of the Wishkah	Prince – Emancipation
	Bjork – Telegram

I was eight years old the Christmas I was given my first compact disc, and I don't remember knowing about the technology before the moment I tore the wrapping off of Elton John's *Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only the Piano Player*. It seemed odd to me even then that my parents would choose this particular album, as neither of them had or have any particular affinity for it or for Elton John. I do know my mother fairly well, however, and have surmised that there must have been a 3-for-1 deal at Wal-Mart the Friday after Thanksgiving that year; LeAnn Rimes, The Spice Girls, and Elton John seem, in this context, logical picks. (EDIT: As it turns out, although *Don't Shoot Me...* was released in its original format in 1989, it was released on CD in 1996. Perhaps Jane Fisher just snagged a handful of New Releases.) Also, apparently, worth noting: it may have been the first CD I can claim to have owned, but it wasn't until a friend wrote "Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid" on a dollar bill and passed it to me in English class as a sophomore in high school that Elton John played even a minute role in my life; my romantic entanglements with the film *Almost Famous* (in which Kate Hudson croons Elton's "Tiny Dancer" to a moon-eyed Patrick Fugit and a bus full of pseudo rock stars) are copious (but not to be dwelled upon here, in this particular tangent).

This was also the year that my mother gave our family's outdated desktop computer – in all its black screen, neon green type perfection – to her own parents, believing this to be the most appropriate way to teach clueless sexagenarians the technical skills associated with owning one's own word processor. [Insert reference to the 1990s computer game, *The Oregon Trail*, here.]

With the advent of the compact disc came the birth of the many people who play songs on repeat. With cassette tapes, listening to the same song twice was hard labor. Not only did you have to have the patience to sit in front of your stereo (or in the passenger seat of your father's sand-colored Toyota Land Cruiser, or hand-to-hip with your Walkman) with your index finger pressed down on the rewind button, but you had to be familiar enough with the album to be confident in your ability to

rewind (the frustration associated with rewinding a tape too far past your chosen song's beginning, to have to listen to the preceding song – a song you didn't like all that much to begin with – was palpable (to all parties involved), and having to continually press the rewind button if you happened to miscalculate a song's length was just as crushing to one's fragile I'll-pick-the-music ego). Vinyl records posed a similar problem, except the price was much higher: not only does one run the risk of scratching a record (and as an eight year-old, this risk was high), but one's tolerance for the sound of that scratch only extends so far.

So, when rewinding became a matter of a one-touch press of a << track button on a CD player, or even on the remote to that CD player, abusers of such a luxury surfaced. My sister was such an abuser, and in my own moon-eyed or love-sick moments of elementary school, I was, too. One year after *Don't Shoot Me...*, I will insert the Titanic soundtrack into my three-foot SONY boom box and play Celine Dion's My Heart Will Go On on repeat for hours.

I will insist (read: pretend) that I have grown out of this teenage habit, but my sister will utilize the repeat button on every one of her car's stereo systems and break her way through a handful of iPods with her constant use of the Repeat One option.