

July 06, 2019

Volume 1, Track 2: It's Not Living (If It's Not With You)

by Jordan Pelavin

By the Fourth of July in 2018, I knew I wanted to leave California, but I didn't know where I wanted to go. This has been a theme in my life—the need to move, to go, to start over, to try something different without quite figuring out what that something is.

We watched the fireworks from the beach that year. Or, more accurately, a boardwalk overlooking the ocean. My friends and I had gotten there early enough to spread out blankets and towels and small chairs. To snuggle in and try and pull up the radio program on our phones.

From where I lived in Southern California, you could see down the shoreline for forever. So on the Fourth of July you could watch firework show after firework show; close and far and middle distance, as they lit up the sky in neon colors and smoky shadows. One town. Then the next. Then the next.

It was a cool night, as far as California goes. Which means it was barely cool at all, and I felt content in a way that I don't often find myself feeling.

It wasn't my last good day in California, but I think it was when I really started the ticking countdown in my head. When I started thinking of things as my 'last'; my last visit to the pier, my last drive down the PCH at sunrise, my last wakeup call from the parrots who lived outside my bedroom window. A premature nostalgia, born of anxious insecurity that made the future seem less appealing than the past. A way of looking at moments as memories, even as I lived them.

After the fireworks show my friends and I waited in a parking lot for our ride, laid out on the sidewalk of an upscale chain restaurant, I played music on my phone as we waited for the rush of people to die down so our car could make it's way into the parking lot.

My friends in California liked to make fun of my playlists. I have a million of them, and they can get pretty specific. And while it's possible the playlist specifically for cleaning my bathroom is overkill, it makes me feel in control to split my music by mood or by feeling or

by season.

My favorite playlist, maybe, is the one I make each summer.

Here's what I think makes a good summer song; it needs to feel bright and sunny. It doesn't have to be danceable exactly- but it does need to be boppy enough that if you put it on at a picnic your friends would sway. It needs to be something fun to sing along to. It works for driving and it works for barbeques and it works for late nights and early mornings and for cleaning your room and for getting a little too tipsy on frozen drinks when it's much too hot out.

Or, I guess, for lying on your back in a parking lot, watching the smoke clear after a fireworks show, trying to imagine different ways to fill the wide-open expanse of your so far empty future.

Ok, so [It's Not Living \(If It's Not With You\)](#) by the 1975 is technically about one of the band member's addiction to heroin. Which isn't really a situation that's relevant to my life, but listen to how the song shimmers. It feels like summertime. It feels loose and longing and vast. It feels like a day on the beach or a night in the park or that special kind of lost you can only get on a summer day when you have nowhere important to be.

It's really fucking hot in Boston right now. It's in the 90s and it's humid and my apartment has no AC. Summer is definitely here. So what I want is summer songs. And this is one I loved last year and one I love this year, and one I think I'm going to love for a while.

Maybe you will love it too.



[#the1975](#) [#itsnotliving](#) [#pearltroll](#)

The 1975 ~ It's Not Living (If It's Not With You) Lyrics

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See you next Saturday,
Jordan