

GROW INSPIRED

Play That Again

Recently, I was searching Spotify for an album I had purchased years ago at Starbucks. It was a “point of sale” impulse buy, but one I’m so glad I made. The album, “Too Marvelous: a Collection of Jazz Classics,” was a sonically perfected blend of tunes. I can still remember playing it on the large, black CD player/stereo receiver in my apartment’s living room. Billie Holiday, Coleman Hawkins, Stan Getz, Nina Simone, Charles Mingus, Gene Ammons, John Coltrane, Oscar Peterson, and, of course, Ella Fitzgerald—all packed into one album. I loved it, and listening to these jazz greats always boosted my mood.

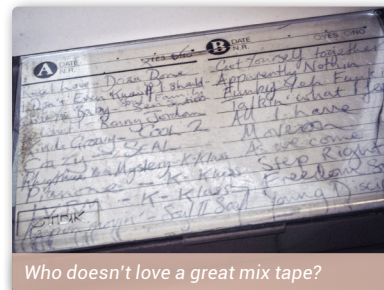
You can imagine my disappointment when I failed to find this album in digital format. I realized it was only a limited promotional release from Starbucks and not a widely distributed album. But I really wished I could listen to it again—or even just capture the song list—so I climbed up into our attic to dig through the contents of our “CD box.” Okay, full 90s nostalgia ahead: you’ve been warned. My husband and I have a large, wide box containing all our

CDs—or at least the jewel cases. Many of the actual disks are safely stored in sleeves within a huge three-ring zip-up case downstairs in a cabinet. The intense heat of the uninsulated attic would likely ruin the disks if we left them up there.

Glancing through this box of CDs, I had a flashback to a time when people would have a CD tower as a piece of furniture in their living room. We'd stack all our CDs out in the open for visitors to peruse (and judge) when they visited. It was actually a good way to get to know a new friend: his or her CD tower contents laid bare any pretenses.

It was usually a relief to find some overlap in music possession between you and your friend (“oh, I have that one”), but it was equally titillating to discover your friend’s guilty pleasure CDs: an entire set of Reba McEntire albums, a Kenny G. Christmas album, or...Cher. I mean, finding something questionable in someone’s CD collection could really make you stop and reconsider just where you were headed in the relationship.

I will admit that my own guilty-pleasure music listening is just as embarrassing as anyone else's. And don't even get me started on cassette tapes I purchased, mixed, and owned. Yes, there's a box of cassettes in our house, too. We're sentimental. I still have the very first cassette I bought with my own money. It's C&C Music Factory's "Gonna Make You Sweat" from 1990. I told my mom it was "workout music" so she'd let me get it, and boy, did I love that tape. I played C&C on my pink stereo boom box and on my knock-off Sony Walkman



Continued on page 2

with headphones *constantly*.

I acquired lots of cassettes after that, and CDs, too. I've always loved a variety of music. When we married and moved into our new home together, our combined music collection became wildly diverse. Suddenly, there was the 'Sleepless in Seattle' sound track sitting cheek-by-jowl with the Beastie Boys' "Hello Nasty;" Nirvana, all sidled up next to Diamond Rio; Led Zeppelin, just chilling with Phantom of the Opera; and holy smokes, Rush smooching Diana Krall. Utter mayhem. Weirdest yet were his mix tapes with feminine handwriting listing the songs on the liner card—only it wasn't *my* handwriting.

Anyway, back up in the attic, I finally found the elusive jazz album I'd been seeking. It was there in the CD box,



neatly saved all these years, surviving a few moves. Inside the cover there's still an unused Starbucks coupon that expired on December 31, 2001. Next to it, I was overjoyed to find another favorite Starbucks special collection album: "An Enchanted Evening: Invitation to the Opera." The only

problem was that I had no way of playing my CDs. So I pulled up Spotify and created an album playlist by finding and saving each of the songs in the order on the release. I took a picture of the front of the case and made it my Spotify album art. Voilà! Keep reading for a link to this great album.

This month I've invited Erica Walker, a very special friend, to share some of her creative ways and interests with us. Hope you enjoy! ♡



Inspiration: Poetry

The Waste Land

I. The Burial of the Dead
T.S. Eliot

Now soon, ah, very soon I know,
The trumpets of the north will blow,
And the great winds will come to bring
The pale wild riders of the snow.

Darkening the sun with level flight
At arrowy speed, they will alight,
Unnumbered as the desert sands,
To bivouac on the edge of night.

Then I, within their sombre ring,
Shall hear a voice that seems to sing
Deep, deep within my tranquil heart,
The valiant prophecy of spring.

Poetryfoundation.org

WildFlower is a monthly publication
featuring writing, interviews, stories,
designs, observations, recommendations,
encouragement and reflections on faith
and creativity.

© 2025 Kristen DeAnn
© 2025 WildFlower

Stock photos from Morguefile, unless
otherwise credited.

Spring

Edna St. Vincent Millay

To what purpose, April, do you return
again?

Beauty is not enough.
You can no longer quiet me with the
redness
Of little leaves opening stickily.
I know what I know.
The sun is hot on my neck as I observe
The spikes of the crocus.
The smell of the earth is good.
It is apparent that there is no death.
But what does that signify?

Not only under ground are the brains
of men
Eaten by maggots.
Life in itself
Is nothing,
An empty cup, a flight of uncarpeted
stairs.

It is not enough that yearly, down this
hill,

April
Comes like an idiot, babbling and
strewing flowers.

allpoetry.com

The Easter Song

Keith Green

Hear the bells ringing
They're singing, that you can be
born again
Hear the bells ringing
They're singing, "Christ is risen
from the dead!"

The angel up on the tombstone
Said, "He has risen, just as He said
Quickly now, go tell His disciples
That Jesus Christ is no longer
dead!"

Joy to the world
He has risen, hallelujah
He's risen, hallelujah
He's risen, hallelujah
Hallelujah

genius.com

Spotlight on Photographer Erica Walker

Tell us a little about your yourself.

I'm Erica Walker. I'm married to Brian, and we have three kids. We live in Claremont, California.

Where did you find inspiration for creativity when you were younger, and where do you find it now?

I've always been caught by the idea of 'things that don't fit.' Where there are things that are alike, but then one thing isn't. I like looking at patterns and asking, "Why does this all fit together?" Seeing things that don't fit together catches my attention: shadows behaving weirdly, colors that don't go together, someone doing something unusual. I use that in Photography. Years ago, when we had the silver eclipse, and I remember standing in the village and seeing the crescent shadows. I'm definitely inspired by things that don't belong. I'm

also inspired by being amazed at someone's creativity. Knitting, furniture, architecture. Someone had a thought, and now we have this item. I like to wonder, "How did they have this idea?"

Please tells us about your sewing and knitting talents!

I grew up in a family with five kids. I remember knowing I had to be independent and figure out problems on my

own. I took sewing lessons in 5th or 6th grade. I learned how to crochet at church. My first project was a rag rug. But I found that sewing was much faster—so I made quilts and clothes. Years ago when I came home for a visit from college, my brother was in a ska band, and his bandmate's girlfriend taught him how to knit, and then my brother taught me. I was always sewing. I took my machine to grad school because at that time, it was cheaper to sew my own clothes. I've made two quilts. One is hand quilted.

I can knit and crochet faster now. Motherhood can be boring and isolating because you don't have a legacy of doing the same stuff. Everything is undone as soon as you do it. I wanted to create something that had more permanence. Sewing's too dangerous around little babies and kids, with pins, needles, hot irons. I figured out that at parks, I could bring my knitting while my kids played. I've made sweaters, hats, scarves. Knitting's good for distracting brain, and it's a hobby where I feel productive and not wasteful. I can always be making something—like the pilgrims. I can do it in the dark, in the car—it's the most portable hobby. I can always switch to photography, and I like woodworking.

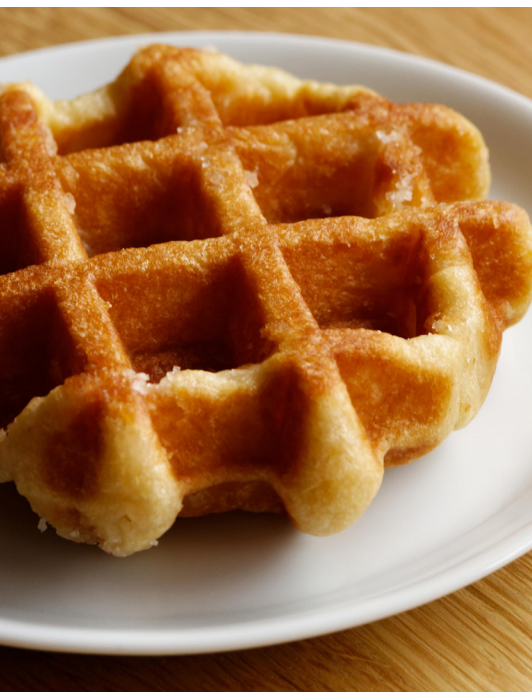


Self portrait. Photo by Erica Walker.



One of her knitting projects. Photo by Erica Walker.

Continued on page 4



Erica Recommends: Sourdough Waffles, by Jami Boys

Ingredients:

1 cup sourdough starter	2 tablespoons honey
2 cups warm water just tap-water warm	½ teaspoon salt
3 cups whole wheat flour	¼ teaspoon baking soda
3 large eggs	1 tablespoon water
½ cup melted butter you can use oil, but butter or ghee tastes better	For serving: fruit whipped cream, maple syrup, etc.

The night before you want to make the waffles, combine first three ingredients in a large bowl and beat until smooth. Cover and let stand overnight at room temperature. In the morning add the eggs, oil, honey, and salt. Stir the baking soda in the tablespoon of warm water, stir quickly and then pour right into the batter. Mix together gently and let stand about 15 minutes while the waffle iron heats up. Cook until done, lightly greasing the iron after each waffle.

Wait. Hold on now. Did you say woodworking?

Yeah, I needed a side table for our living room—it had to be a certain size. Something very simple, with metal legs, a wooden top. I used a band saw to cut the wood, then I sanded it, stained it and assembled it. I also made a bench for the back yard.

What sort of things inspire you in the every day?

Things we need. Things that would make life better. Random, weird inventions. Sometimes I talk with my kids, and we imagine solutions for everyday frustrations. I try to find things that don't exist—therefore I must make it, acquire a skill, get equipment. Sometimes I find a challenge. I ask, why don't I know how to do that? Like decorating cakes. We don't even eat that many sweets. But I found I needed to decorate cakes. So I learned how to make fancy flowers out of frosting. Something as pretty and tasty as bakery. I'm still working on getting the flavor just right. I like to experiment with other recipes. Our family has certain food preferences—but I don't want to make the same boring

three meals. When you have limitations, it forces you to be creative.

What are some projects you're working on currently?

I always have a variety of knitting projects going on. I like knitting garments because

the construction is a challenge for me. I have some photography ideas. When I take photos, I don't like doing a lot of post-editing. I try to tag a photo if it needs help. Then I upload it all to lightroom, and edit it when I can. I got a new camera for Christmas—it's so much more powerful. His name is Felix II, a Fuji camera (all my cameras have names). For our Hawaii trip this summer, I'm going to take one of my film cameras. I've tried lots of different film cameras. Like the old ones where everything is manual. My Minolta—her name is Matilda—is from the 1970s or 80s. I also like to use my Nikon F2 to shoot around town. It's the same camera used by the pros in Vietnam. My favorite is the Minolta. I only bring two lenses. One on the camera, and one as a back up. I don't have any zoom lenses. But



Erica's fleet of cameras. Erica introduces her cameras: 1.) This Nikon F2 A is the heaviest, most dependable camera in the group and thus has earned the name of The Most Honorable Lord Nelson of Her Majesty's Fleet. 2.) This flexible Minolta XG-M is strong and capable. Her name is Minerva. 3.) My Olympus 35 EC is kinda quirky and is named Oscar. 4.) Rounding out the film cameras, my old Nikon FM 10 is showing his age a bit. His name is Norman. Not pictured because he's nearly always taking the pictures is my trustworthy digital mirrorless Fuji XT-2. He's getting on in years but Felix is still very adventurous. Photo by Erica Walker.

which camera I use depends on the shots I'm expecting. I like to take documentary, street-style photos.

What are you reading/listening to/cooking/growing/knitting these days?

I'm still enthralled by medieval history. When we started planning a trip to England six years ago, I wanted to learn more about the history, and I'm continuing to read books about it. We've been to England twice

now, in 2022 and 2024. I'm very neglectful of plants. I had a pandemic garden—but it's not suitable for leaving for three weeks during the summer. I tend to go with herbs, which are the types of plant that can thrive without water. I have two fruit trees: Meyer lemon and cara cara orange, both in pots.

How do you nurture creativity? How do you make space for inspiration in your life?

Alone time. Trying to remind myself to use my alone time wisely. I make sure I have time to myself, on an afternoon by myself. The hardest time is during the summer, when I'm on call morning until night with no time to myself—I have to steal time for myself. I try to prioritize things that are important, like going to gym, or teaching my daughter to cook.

What's a place that inspires you, and why that place?

Depends on the type of inspiration I need. I'd love to live in England in the Cotswolds area. I love walking the Claremont Colleges campus. There's lots of cool architecture, old houses around town, and old trees. Brian likes to go hiking. I want to do some of that, but I'm also drawn to the cities. ♡

Keep scrolling to read Erica's music and shopping recommendations!



Another finished knitting project. Photo by Erica Walker.



Capturing inspiring images around town. Photo by Erica Walker.

Recommended Listen: Jazz and an Archived Mix Tape

Erica is all about musicals. She says there's no musical she doesn't love. Something about the complex vocal story telling of musical scores helps her brain get fired up. She enjoys some types of jazz, like Dave Brubeck's "Take Five." She has an awesome playlist of 70s, 80s, and 90s rock. In that vein, here's a mix tape—an early version of a playlist—that I found in the Internet Archive. Have a listen, you'll love it! Also, as promised, here's my long-sought jazz album, "Too Marvelous."



Shopping: Vintage stores

Erica loves vintage stores, independent thrift stores, and antique shops. She especially recommends Deelux and Vintage Odyssey, both in the Claremont Village. She likes to get handmade soap at the Feel Good Market, also in the village. When she travels, Erica always chooses a very small, light souvenir like a tea towel, or an ornament for her family's Christmas tree. "Not a cheesy glass ornament," she's quick to add. "It has to be something cool. One of our favorites from England is a soldier made out of needled felt, and I love that it reminds me of where we got it." 🌿

Soap: Lush

Speaking of handmade soap, let's talk about Lush. I love Lush. Lush is not paying me to say this. I discovered Lush more than 15 years ago when a friend told me it was her "favorite soap." I couldn't imagine what was so special about soap until I walked into Lush and immediately fell prey to the captivating lure of nearly every single product. There's not enough space to talk about all my favorites, and so here are just a few: Daddy-O purple shampoo; Candy Rain (sometimes shouted from a running shower in our house: "Can somebody bring me some Candy Rain?") Big, Cup o' Coffee, Marilyn, Lime Bounty, and any bath bomb in the collection. Now go. Right now. Go get your mom some soap for Mother's Day.



"Upper Antelope Canyon" by Jarek Tuszyński - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0

The End: Until Next Time



I hope you've enjoyed this nostalgic issue of *WildFlower*. I plan to be back next month with an interview with an incredible artist, as well as some original essays, writings, and inspiration. If you'd like to submit content or ideas, please reach out to editor@wildflowerjournal.com. 🌿