



Muzak My Eyes Out

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I know I'm not breaking down any barriers by complaining about Muzak, but they play it in my office. And if I hear "Killing Me Softly" one more time, I am going to throw my head through a brick wall.

I will hear it again, of course, because it plays twice a day, sometimes three. And when I'm standing in front of that brick wall—my head preparing for its worst trauma since being squeezed out of my mom's vag—I will have no choice but to contemplate how. How has it come to this?

"Killing Me Softly" bugs me the most out of all the crap that plays over my cubicle (and it's *a lot* of crap) because I know the original quite well. I know what it's about. I know the words. I know all the cues. I know it was number one on the charts for five weeks in February and March of 1973. And I know it was written by Lori Lieberman and performed by Roberta Flack.

I now hate them both. Which is a shame because they are, at worst, very good musicians. And though they're not directly responsible for this monstrosity of instrumentalization, they are still responsible. By virtue of creating "Killing Me Softly," they must be blamed, because the song was good enough for the fucking asshole devils at Muzak to work that tune into a puke-tified, smooth jazz, horn-heavy headache of a song. If we can even call it a song. I'm shuddering.

And I know hate is a strong word. I should save it for murderers and presidents and black olives. But this tune just makes me feel so awful inside, repeatedly, it fills me up with so much animosity, I can't help but think about causing physical harm to myself and others. Including kittens.

Muzak is intended to blend into the background of the workplace and create healthy ambience for obedient corporate workers. They claim...they *claim* that Muzak has been proven to reduce errors and improve morale in business across the country.

What a bunch of fucking bullshit.

You want to know what really happens? When "Killing Me Softly" comes on, my attention goes straight to it. I start singing, "*Strumming my pain with his fingers...*" But the words don't come on. Some flute or oboe or whatever the fuck it is comes on. I get dizzy. My heart beats faster, followed by at least three sequential hot flashes. I become filled with anger and, soon, rage toward every single thing in the world. Good or bad. And you know what? I stop working. I do. I stop and am forced to plug my ears and do breathing exercises just for some sense of mental salvation.

But I can't ignore the bitter, reviling thoughts about the woman who wrote and the other who sang an otherwise beautiful tribute to the music of Don McLean.

I hate them. And now that I'm thinking about it, I hate Don McLean.

Only Muzak could make me hate the dude who wrote and performed the greatest song in the history of rock and roll. Woof. That's not a statement taken too lightly.

And I wonder, if music hadn't died on the Day The Music Died, would Muzak have ceased to exist?

The answer? Probably not. Muzak got its start in the 1930's, long before Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper. Yeah, it started by piping the crap into elevators. It had a calming effect on the nerve-wracked elevator riders. Then somehow—smack, bang, boom—it ended up playing in my office.

As my officemates happily go about their business, I begin to wonder, does anybody here care about this monster? I ask this question as a saxophone and a harp meander through a haunting rendition of "Stairway To Heaven."

A SAXOPHONE!!!!

AND A FUCKING HARP!!!!

Does anybody care about how wrong this is? Isn't this supposed to be the greatest rock and roll song ever? Anyone? We know John Bonham doesn't care because he's dead. We know Pete Townshend doesn't care because he's with The Who. Andy Garcia doesn't care. Well, maybe he does, but I had to mention him because a woman in my office just said, "Now Andy Garcia, that's a guy I'd like to get into the deep water with...or the shallow water." (What does that even mean?)

I'll tell you who should care. North Shore Bank. I cannot fathom how any institution that claims that they truly care about their employees would force them to listen to this crap. Okay, granted, I'm a temp and not technically one of their employees. But please, please. What do I have to do to make this stop?

Well, they should at the very least care about the walls of their corporate offices, specifically the brick ones. I care about music and my sanity too much not to throw my head through them.

And let me tell you, North Shore Bank, you can play “It’s Too Late” as much as you want—you’re just promoting my temporary insanity and the destruction of your walls.

But first, let me tell you about how much I now hate Carole King.