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Marta Frances Lee
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**The Report Committee for Marta Frances Lee
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:**

Linger On

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Jeff Williams, Supervisor

Beili Liu

Linger On

by

Marta Frances Lee

Report

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Dedication

This is for Olaf, my trusty green Volvo stationwagon.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank all of the women in my life who have set examples for me, especially but not limited to those who play guitar, paint, or dance.

Abstract

Linger On

Marta Frances Lee, MFA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2018

Supervisor: Jeff Williams

A list of my earliest memories functions as an index to the internal logic of my work. The people I have met, the music I have listened to, objects I have seen, and places I have been to are the major variables. In my studio, playful structure and material exploration interact with these ideas, resulting in an oscillation between figuration and abstraction that prolongs viewing.

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Introduction

She's got everything she needs. She's an artist, she don't look back.

Bob Dylan, "She Belongs to Me"

I was born in Moscow, Idaho, and lived in Pullman, Washington until I was 10. I don't remember much about my hometown, or my life before age 10. What I do remember are visual, textural snippets:

the maroon of our leather couch and the weird, fossil-like stones in our front yard
the locations of the piano and the stereo in the corners of the living room
the long, wooden rectangle of the dining room table
the curve of the walk from my house to school
the square shape of the overhead light in my parents' bedroom
the tiny hallway with a miniature basketball hoop
my sister pushing her feet against my chest until the wind was knocked out of me
my red bed frame, which we rotated and converted into a lion's cage
a shadow on my ceiling that looked like a witch
the pale yellow of our old Volvo station wagon

These memories exist as evidence that I have always been acutely aware of the same kinds of information. Colors, textures, anything related to music, dancing, or geometry, takes precedence and impacts my studio practice.

Narrative

Harness your hopes on just one person, because you know, a harness was only made for one.

Pavement



FIGURE 1: THE PAST THREE YEARS OF MY LIFE, 2012

Perhaps as a way to help myself remember more, I started keeping a daily diary on my first day of college, August 22nd, 2010. I have maintained this practice, and now have a literal record of my academic life. The language of these pages is telling. I often use the words “ended up” to explain what I did next. I say that I felt “weird,” or that it was “really great to catch up with” someone. My food tends to be “yummy.” It’s always “so nice to see Mama.” I used to say the same about my dog, Rollei, before he passed. Every day I write down what time I wake up, and what time I go to sleep. I write in the

parenthetical parts of the day as well, like showering, eating breakfast, drinking coffee and apple cider vinegar. Now Duolingo has become part of this daily ritual, of doing and recording. If I can remember, I write down what I dreamt about the night before at the beginning of the next day. I always write my entries at the end of the day, right before I sleep (This functions as a nice way of going back over what I've done that day. And how else would I record my bedtime?) When I travel, sometimes I use a temporary diary, like a memo notebook, afraid of losing these pages upon pages of mundane details.

In the fall of 2016, I put my first diary (an old green one that says AGENDA, pictured in Figure 1) and second diary (It appears to be light pink from a distance but has a number of stripes lining its cover) in a still life on a cart (Figure 2). I had a conversation during a visit with Kristin Lucas where I was attempting to explain the diaries visually, and I removed one from the still life and opened it up to a random page. She was surprised by this action. She said that if it was a sculpture, I shouldn't be moving its parts; that it should be fixed. At the time, I felt that she was incorrect. I haven't moved either of the diaries an inch since. I've found an immense amount of relief from being unable to access them. Perhaps I made a sculpture after all.



FIGURE 2: STILL LIFE ON CART, 2016



FIGURE 3: *ANTICLIMACTIC*, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 18" X 24", 2016

Process

I'll give you fish, I'll give you candy. I'll give you, everything I ever had.

the B-52s, "Give Me Back My Man"

I'm pledging my time to you, hoping you'll come through too.

Bob Dylan "Pledging My Time"

You can have it all.

Yo La Tengo "You Can Have It All"

This gun's for hire, even if we're just dancing in the dark.

Bruce Springsteen "Dancing in the Dark"

Canvas

I prefer to make my own canvases from scratch. Though the medium has always been prevalent (my mother's paintings hang around our house, and I began flirting with the materials as soon as I could hold a brush), I started taking it seriously in 2012. I remember struggling and being totally perplexed by the process of stretching canvas in my first painting class. The second time I tried to stretch canvases, I eventually surrendered and had one of my closest friends, Ian, (who at the time was a mere stranger) help me fold my corners. Another old friend, Sam, once told me that to stretch your canvas properly, your hands should be bleeding by the end. My professor and close mentor EJ Hauser marks the end of her staple rows with a red sharpie; when she starts seeing red staples, she knows she only has two or three left before she has to refill her gun. This kind of hyper-practicality coupled with the simplicity of the action defines her character and seriousness. Once my mother and I stretched a large canvas together on top of our pool table. When I am stretching a canvas, all of these memories come to mind, and these habits, like expecting some physical pain as a marker of doing a "good job," have lingered for at least six years. I see these seemingly mundane actions as little tributes to not only these individuals and the knowledge passed on but also the tradition of painting itself. I have always been smitten with the process of applying gesso to a canvas. I find it to be ex-

tremely meditative, and I enjoy the ritual of it; starting in the middle and working my way out; alternating between horizontal and vertical brushstrokes between layers, thinking about whether or not I want to keep part of the canvas raw by masking it off with tape to reframe the image or create a compositional structure. I especially enjoy the color of the raw canvas alongside the white of the gesso. Leaving part of the canvas raw also emphasizes gesso's purpose. Having white primer beneath your colors makes them much brighter, alongside areas of color where the paint becomes the raw canvas absorbs and dulls the color.

The Transfer

Another material element that has become more integral is the transfer process. Last year, I began experimenting with matte medium transfers as a way to create my own patterns in my paintings. When I started photocopying drawings of shoes, I noticed a cycle between the original and the copy. A specific individual purchases a pair of Adidas sneakers. Once they have been worn enough, they become unique to that individual. I make a drawing of this specific pair of shoes, and when I Xerox this drawing and create multiples, it becomes a copy. Once this copy goes through the matte medium transfer process, however, it returns back to being a nuanced version of itself, which I then use to create a pattern. This summer, I began creating transfers of photographs, sometimes using the original image and letting a printer run out of ink (Fig. 4), and other times zooming into the image until it becomes a texture (Fig. 5). This marrying of photography and painting relates to my interest in subjectivity and the nuanced multiple.



FIGURE 4: *ESTHER'S BATHROOM* (SHAWANO, WISCONSIN), ACRYLIC, FLASHE, & TRANSFER ON CANVAS, 35" X 33", 2017



FIGURE 5: *BUILDING (MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN)*, ACRYLIC & TRANSFER ON CANVAS OVER PANEL, 27" X 23", 2017

Fun Rules

Only losers go to school.

the Weeknd

Not unlike the structure of keeping a daily diary, my studio practice often exists within a certain temporality. My friend Corinna Ray pointed out to me once that most people don't think of rules as "fun." In my practice, I find it necessary and extremely helpful to my process to establish some guidelines. They give me something to follow with blind faith, or to stray from with reason.

Towards the end of 2016, I decided to make a playlist for each semester of graduate school. The length of these mixes, fifteen songs each, reflects the number of credit hours earned, and references the colloquial terms that we use for our final reviews: fifteens, thirties, forty-fives, and finally, sixties. After being carefully sequenced and proof-read for variety, flow, and value, these playlists were listened to on repeat, especially but not exclusively during the final stretch of making each body of work. Listening to these songs on loop creates a meditative rhythm for my practice.

The main thing I remember about working at Jerry's Artarama in Knoxville is spending part of my lunch break outside, looking at an abandoned building (Figure 6). I remember how important it felt, taking notes in my tiny, blue Fabriano notebook. It was so satisfying to gather information in this analog way and make the most of those five or ten minutes. I gave myself rules; no photographs of the building until the painting is done. There were no drawings or diagrams, unless necessary. I only used written notes, which mostly consisted of counting rows of cinder blocks.

Last spring, I painted the area with the flags and shrubs, near the Tower in Austin (Figure 7). For reasons that are still a bit of a mystery to me, this space resonated with me immediately. I know that the *nearly* mirrored geometry appeals to me. I also learned that the Texas flag is the only state flag that can be flown at the same height as the United States flag. Beyond caring about what this means for Texas, I am intrigued that this kind of logic (physical height as a measure of respect) still has weight, despite its primitive

mentality. This kind of basic thinking relates to my attraction to the medium of painting. My old professor Michael Berryhill once said that painters were like cavemen, moving mud around on surfaces with sticks. While I value and recognize the intellectual and emotional labor that can go into such simplistic physical actions, I also find his comedic notion to be refreshingly modest.



FIGURE 6: *BLDG NEXT TO NEXT TO JERRY'S*, 2015-16, 48" X 48". 2015-16

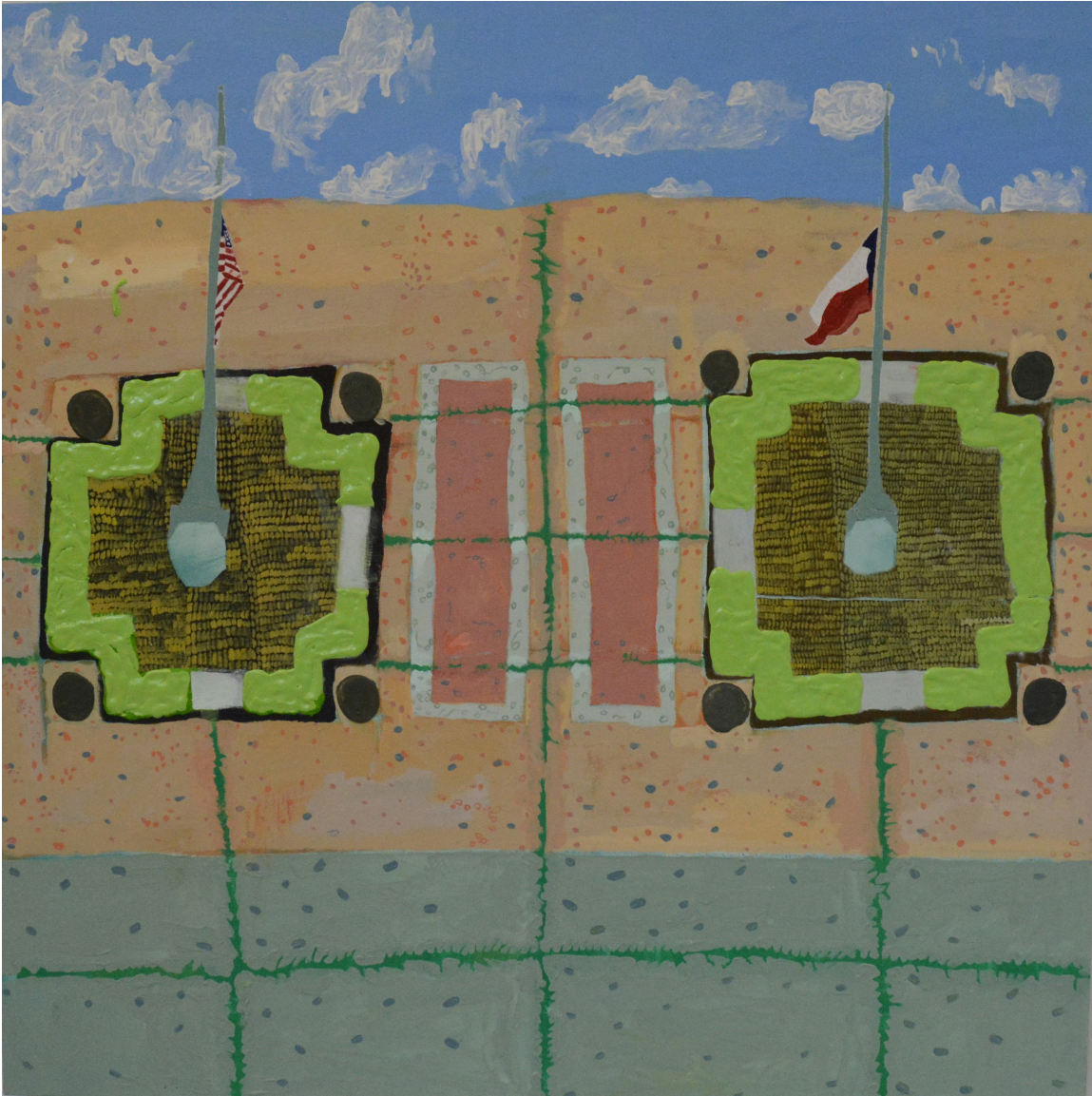


FIGURE 7: *COURT(YARD)*, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 48" X 48", 2017

Strength in Numbers

Every1's a winner baby, that's no lie.

Hot Chocolate, "Every1's a Winner"

	abstraction 15	figuration 15	apparel 10	text 10	materiality 10	color 15	space 5
Pat 2 Artists (49)	12	7	0	8	7	15	0
cushion (46)	13	5	3	0	10	10	1
Inside out (50)	10	13	10	0	8	13	2
conation (43)	15	0	0	4	10	14	0
b. ball court (37)	15	0	0	3	6	8	0
Poolouse (30)	6	0	0	0	10	12	3
Bob (40)	5	13	8	0	7	9	2
Acc (38)	13	0	0	4	8	12	1
lans Plate (36)	13	2	0	0	7	12	2
Belona (44)	2	14	10	0	7	11	1
Happy baby (41)	10	7	8	7	8	13	0
El Gipsy (33)	13	0	0	0	7	12	1
Joy bi (43)	3	7	10	8	9	6	0
Pink w (29)	12	0	0	0	8	9	0
Ent piece (32)	0	0	0	9	9	13	1
untucked (34)	9	2	9	0	9	5	0
summer (35)	0	0	0	10	8	12	5
chaint (40)	7	13	10	0	8	12	0

FIGURE 8: PAINTING EVALUATION CHART, 2015

Thinking about what defines a successful piece for me, I am reminded of a chart that I created when I was applying for graduate school. I was having trouble deciding which paintings to include in my portfolio, and a friend suggested that I break my work down into categories of what it was achieving.

The chart is made up of two axes. On the left side, there are titles of paintings (the x axis), while the y-axis is defined by these categories: *abstraction*, *figuration*, *apparel*, *text*, *materiality*, *color*, and *space*. These areas are then weighted: *abstraction*, *figuration*, and *color* exist on a 15-point scale, whereas *materiality*, *apparel*, and *text* only take up 10

points. *Space* is allotted a mere 5 points. Out of 80 possible total points, the highest scoring painting, *Inside-Out* (figure 9), earned 56, barely a passing grade at 70%. This eye-opening exercise goes beyond my applications. Besides being silly and extremely nerdy, breaking down my work in these concrete, mathematical terms gives me hope. While it may not be realistic to achieve the full potential in all seven categories, at least this defines what I am striving for, and allows significant room for knowledge and improvement. I applied this rating system to my most current piece, *Laying and Lying* (figure 10), and came up with the following scores:

abstraction (12/15)

figuration (7/15)

color (13/15)

materiality (9/10)

apparel (7/10)

text (2/10)

space (4/5)

total: 54/80 = 68%

Beyond this logic, I am most excited about my work when the act of painting and the image go hand in hand. I believe in an inexplicable, nearly ethical code of making, and I try to uphold certain integrity in the studio, even if no one but myself knows or cares. Making work in this way feels right. Following the rules when they need to be followed, being open enough to bend them when they no longer fit. I want to look at painting as a venue for exploring these questions, teaching others, and myself to look at the mud I have moved around on the surface. Maybe something within this act or image will spark something for them.



FIGURE 9: *INSIDE-OUT*, ACRYLIC & OIL ON CANVAS, 36" X 36", 2014



FIGURE 10: *LAYING AND LYING*, ACRYLIC, FLASHE, & TRANSFER ON LINEN, 56" X 48", 2018

Place

I don't wanna mistake my world, for the whole world

Because my world, ain't the whole world.

PUJOL, "Small World"

As someone who moved across the country at a young age, whose family is largely spread out throughout the United States, Canada, and China, I have thought a lot about ways to represent physical distance and separation. In the same way that the absence of sound (silence) becomes its own entity, the space between two people, objects, or ideas also becomes its own form. In more literal terms, I have realized that the longest linear distance on a canvas is diagonally between the corners, which can be used to emphasize the kind of faraway feeling that I relate to emotionally and mentally. The other kind of distance I think about is between my reference material, whether a photo or an object, and the painting that I am making. When I work on a piece, I say I am painting THE THING, not making a painting OF the thing. I would say, I am painting my friend Bucky Miller's couch, or I am painting an aerial view of my studio floor combined with my comforter cover, not "I am making a painting of her sweater," but I am painting her sweater. Sometimes, I make paintings ABOUT the thing. In these situations, I would say, I am making a painting about the importance of the music taking over the memory of an interaction with a person who also likes the music. I feel that what I am doing is very direct.

I spent the fall semester of 2017 in London as an exchange fellow at the Royal College of Art. Whether by coincidence or not, most of the friends I made during this time were non-native English speakers. When we talked, we engaged in language as an activity, teaching each other little phrases and reciting them, somewhat jokingly. This kind of dialogue exemplifies the combination of study and play that my work inhabits.

Last summer, I participated in the Fire Island Artist Residency in Cherry Grove. This was the first time that I witnessed a large community of gay and lesbian people, in any context. Having spent most of my adolescence in Tennessee, being queer was some-

thing to hide, and maybe be proud of once a year. While I was on Fire Island, I began to question my interest in belonging: Was I missing a sense of home from moving across the country at a young age, or from never living in a community of people like myself? My work exists in an earnest awkwardness, sometimes referred to as “slingy“, “wonky“, or “slightly off“, which extends into the kinds of subject matter I am drawn to: bold colors, androgyny, heavily patterned, kitschy fabrics, anything that seems a bit out of place or rejected.

Objecthood



FIGURE 11: *COUCHED IN OUR INDIFFERENCE*, ACRYLIC, OIL BAR, & TRANSFER ON LINEN, 30" X 45" EACH, 2018

Something as mundane as the blanket I sleep with every night, or the rug I lay on in my studio extends beyond simple comfort and takes on a narrative quality. What can these kinds of domestic, core elements of everyday experience stand for? On their own, they make up a wealth of our selves, and can even become symbols of our own bodies, signs that we were there, imprints of our time spent with them. A friend's couch is not just a place to sit, it is a place to sit and talk and laugh. It becomes a site for engagement,

through common musical taste, relatable life experiences, simple, stupid, sometimes clever, humor. A painting of this space strives to give you a sense of these ideas. A red sweater with white cloudy blobs catches my eye and dominates my memory of meeting someone for the first, and last, time. What causes the lingering of these ideas? I place the album cover of my new favorite band directly over my poorly imagined sweater, a hulking figure partially erased by a thick square of red oil paint (Figure 12). Does the illegibility of this painting complicate its read to the point of intrigue or disconnect? Is it ever fair to assume two viewers will have the same experience with one piece? Isn't the clumsiness of this piece an appropriate avenue for its subject matter? Haven't we all had those experiences where we meet someone and we replace our desire for something with a desire for a symbol of it? The goal is not to express one experience or idea. The goal is to open a door or window to a place that resonates without having to be recognizable. I am looking to answer these questions and develop a language of abstraction that can best articulate this ambiguity.

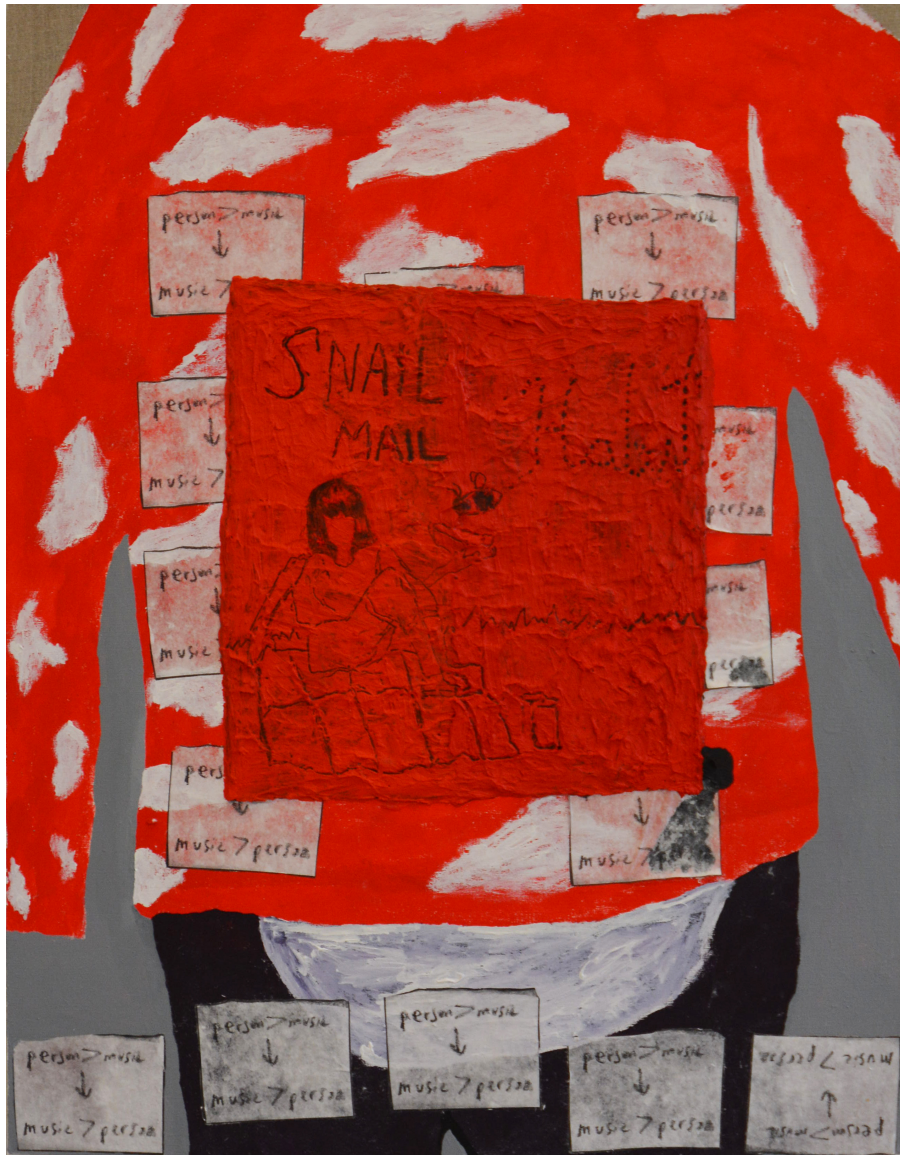


FIGURE 12: NOT A TEEN ANYMORE, ACRYLIC, OIL, FLASHE, & TRANSFER ON LINEN, 30" X 24", 2018

Conclusion

Sometimes I feel so happy, sometimes I feel so sad

Sometimes I feel so happy, but mostly you just make me mad.

the Velvet Underground, "Pale Blue Eyes"

Using a broad definition of mad that extends far beyond anger, this opening line from one of the most perfectly-written songs describes an oscillation similar to what I often feel within and without the studio. I am attracted to the care, comfort, and frustration of the painting process. Enticed by hopeful beginnings, I am drawn in and captivated by the medium's wide array of possibility. Some paintings resolve themselves, others fight back. The objects depicted come to life in a way unique to the medium. I want my work to capture fleeting moments, while giving viewers a sense of my commitment. I am playing with memory and the way our ideas of people and objects transform and fade over time. Like our perception, paintings contain layers of history. They are impacted by our bodies and moods. Working within a balance of stubbornness and openness, I hope to continue raising curiosities while providing viewers an image that is both visually seductive and conceptually vigorous.

The Playlists

Fifteens (Fall 2016)

1. She Belongs to Me - Bob Dylan
2. Schizophrenia - Sonic Youth
3. Harness Your Hopes - Pavement
4. All My Friends - LCD Soundsystem
5. Small World - PUJOL
6. Last Year's Man - Leonard Cohen
7. I Found a Reason - the Velvet Underground
8. Heart of Chambers - Beach House
9. You Can Have It All - Yo La Tengo
10. Losers - the Weeknd featuring Labrinth
11. Silver Steps - Royal Bangs
12. Praise You - Fatboy Slim
13. With or Without You - U2
14. the Comeback - Alex Cameron
15. Purple Rain - Prince & the Revolution

Thirties (Spring 2017)

1. Yellow - Coldplay
2. Summer - Modest Mouse
3. Easy to Get - Hot Chip
4. There Will Be Tears - Frank Ocean
5. Some Things Last a Long Time - Beach House
6. Pool - Porches
7. Range Life - Pavement
8. Ambitions - Donkeyboy
9. Cherry - Ratatat
10. KEEPER OF ATLANTIS - PUJOL
11. Boys Don't Cry - the Cure
12. Smash into You - Beyoncé
13. I Heard You Looking - Yo La Tengo
14. Modern Love - David Bowie
15. Nikes - Frank Ocean

Forty-Fives (Fall 2017)

1. Last Living Rose - PJ Harvey
2. When I Grow Up - Fever Ray
3. Money - the Drums
4. Everybody Wants to Love You - Japanese Breakfast
5. Longest Day of the Year - Little Silver
6. Hey, That's No Way to Say Goodbye - Leonard Cohen
7. Nights - Frank Ocean
8. over - sales
9. Tonite - LCD Soundsystem
10. Age of Consent - New Order
11. Logic of Color - Wye Oak
12. Started Right - Hot Chip
13. Every1's a Winner - Hot Chocolate
14. Jane Cum - Japanese Breakfast
15. Vapor Trail - Ride

Sixties (Spring 2018)

1. Slug - Snail Mail
2. Love My Way - Psychedelic Furs
3. Find Me - Porches
4. He Woke Me Up Again - Sufjan Stevens
5. The Dangling Conversation - Simon & Garfunkel
6. Static Buzz - Snail Mail
7. Debaser - Pixies
8. Baby's Arms - Kurt Vile
9. Love on Top - Beyoncé
10. Pressure Drop - Toots & the Maytals
11. Give Me Back My Man - the B-52s
12. Dancing in the Dark - Bruce Springsteen
13. So Long, Marianne - Leonard Cohen
14. So Far Around the Bend - the National
15. Pledging My Time - Bob Dylan
16. Pale Blue Eyes - the Velvet Underground (Bonus Track)

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