

Four Good Things Going On in Music

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IF YOU READ THIS COLUMN every month, you may get the sense that I'm becoming harder to please. To show you that I'm still your forever lover, here's my list of four things that are very much right with music right now.

Beyoncé

Who leaves a megasuccessful group only to become even more successful on her own, garner multiple Grammys with only her name on the trophy, and *then* get back with the band? Only someone both confident and loyal. Beyoncé seems like the type of girl you can ask to hold your wallet while you go swimming in the pool.

Jack-FM

During my most recent three-day stay in L. A., I never once changed the radio station. Imagine a place on the dial that interviews you and your friends, asks what songs you like, and then plays them one after another. The station is called Jack-FM, and I've come to find there are more and more Jack stations cropping up across the country. Almost no DJs, few commercials, and lots of songs you forgot you loved. It's radio turned inside out.

Compact flash recorders

I used to write songs on the road with a DAT (digital audiotape) recorder and a suitcase full of fragile, expensive tapes. Problem was, I was too lazy to rewind and listen to them. Compact flash recorders are a songwriter's saving grace. Using high-capacity flash media cards, you can record hours upon hours of song ideas, then transfer them directly into iTunes via the supplied USB cable. Throw in the ability to record files in MP3 format and you've got an amazing archiving tool. Try it for yourself.

That line in that Killers song ("Mr. Brightside")

"Now they're going to bed / and my stomach is sick / and it's all in my head / but she's touching his chest." It's called deceptive resolution, and it's a powerful device in songwriting. You play what people expect you to sing against what you actually do, and you get two currents of ideas running at the same time. It's deep, it's dirty, and it's really smart. The Killers' lead singer doesn't like me, but he can eat it. I think he has some great tunes.