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A 'heart-y' helping of Pop Arts Valentine's picks

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Love isn't just in the air this Valentine's weekend, it's also in the stereos, the DVD players and bookshelves of countless romantics nationwide. Here, the Pop Arts staff (plus Stater sex columnist Sarika "Sexrika" Jagtiani and news editor Jaclyn Youhana) shares their personal faves in amorous entertainment. So pour the wine, light the candles, read the picks, then run to the nearest music or video store and buy these fabulous picks!

"There Is" - Box Car Racer (From *Box Car Racer*, MCA Records, 2002):

Any acoustic-based song is beautiful, but this song gave me goosebumps the first time I heard it. The rhythm and melody are simple, but powerful. And the lyrics are even better. "Those notes you wrote me, I've kept them all, I've given a lot of thought of how to write you back this fall, With every single letter in every single word, there will be a hidden message about a boy that loves a girl."

Punch Drunk Love (Columbia, 2002):

A very quirky, sweet movie that lets Adam Sandler shine. A brilliant study of just how hard it can be to tell someone how you feel about him or her. *Punch Drunk Love* is just a sweet, funny movie that makes you want to smash your date's face in with a sledgehammer because she (or he) is just so beautiful.

--**Seth Roy**

"Such Great Heights" - Iron & Wine (From the *Garden State* soundtrack, Sony, 2004):

While Ben Gibbard and Jimmy Tamborello of The Postal Service are to credit for the song itself, indie neo-folksters Iron + Wine are responsible for transforming the tune from euphoric electronica to a timeless acoustic ballad that would make Nick Drake weep. And if you ask me, the lone strumming of an acoustic guitar is still one of the most romantic sounds known to man. Sample romantic lyric: "And I have to speculate / That God Himself did make us into corresponding shapes / Like puzzle pieces." Sigh.

Boys Don't Cry (Fox Searchlight, 1999):

All the best big-screen romances function primarily as big rebellious eff-you's to dull, boring, mainstream society, and the ill-fated romance between Brandon (Hilary Swank) and Lana (Chloe Sevigny) is perhaps one of the ultimate examples of that principle. Okay, so maybe a movie that culminates in a grisly rape and double homicide might not be an obvious choice for great Valentine's Day fare, but way more people die in Titanic and people still think that's romantic!

Before the events in this true story take a horrible turn for the worse, what we have is a profoundly moving romance that challenges heterosexist prejudice and illustrates how love can transcend boundaries of gender and social convention. And while the relationship begins with deception, Lana's ultimate acceptance of Brandon regardless of his gender is a revelation of unconditional love.

--**Jason LeRoy**

"Your Love" - The Outside (From *Play Deep*, Sony, 1985):

A twisted romantic song with lyrics like, "Josie's on a vacation far away/Come around and talk it over." Whoever Josie is must be pretty pissed, but the other girl must be totally excited.

Forget that the song revolves around cheating on Josie because he says he loves the other girl. Plus, when he and the non-Josie girl do their thing that night, it's probably ultra-hot because there's danger in it. There's nothing that can replace that forbidden rendezvous pleasure level and adrenaline rush.

The Little Mermaid (Disney, 1989):

There is no love more perfect than that between a 16-year old mermaid and a cute boy named Eric. My favorite love story of all time is Disney's *The Little Mermaid*.

This movie is such a tearjerker, I cry every time I watch it. Plus, no one can forget the crazy obstacles Ariel goes through such as losing her voice, dealing with the bitchy Ursula and her sea-king father smashing everything in her room. Ariel was so determined to get Eric. She trades her fins, family and sea-creature friends for legs and a cute boy. If that's not true love, I don't know what is.

--**Erika Kreider**

All That Heaven Allows (Universal, 1955):

The quintessential film of Douglas Sirk, the master of the American melodrama. The story concerns a widowed New England socialite who falls helplessly in love with her gardener despite the disapproval of her friends. Sirk was an unflinching idealist who never failed to deliver a happy ending, no matter how improbable they sometimes seemed. "These happy endings all express the weak and sly promise that the world is not rotten and out of joint, but meaningful and ultimately in excellent condition," he once told an interviewer. What a great message for Valentine's Day—or any other day, for that matter.

Loveless - My Bloody Valentine (Warner Bros., 1991)

Why tell her you love her when Kevin Shields' screeching guitar feedback speaks volumes large enough to

hold all the world's trashy romance novels? Sure, this pick is unashamedly based on the band's name. But along with The Go-Betweens' 16 Lovers Lane, Loveless is truly one of the great romantic rock records. Some girls might be turned off by the words "screeching guitar feedback," but I wouldn't want to spend Valentine's Day with them, anyways. Runner-up: Big Star's Third/Sister Lovers.

--**Jon Dieringer**

Everyone Says I Love You (Miramax, 1996)

Julia Roberts, Drew Barrymore, Edward Norton and Goldie Hawn lead an all-star cast in the most overlooked film of the '90s. Woody Allen's sumptuous musical is chock full of gorgeous people singing great songs in all four seasons of the year in romantic locales like New York, Paris and Venice. A shamelessly entertaining love letter to fans of musicals and cinema in general. Guaranteed to put a smile on your face. Hunt this movie down now!

"Meet Me By The Water" - Rachael Yamagata (From *Happenstance*, RCA, 2004)

A song tailor-made for slow-dancing under the stars. Yamagata wraps her Fiona-esque pipes around a sparse acoustic guitar, piano and light drum arrangement in a desperate lover's plea that couldn't sound sexier. By the time she implores, "Would you meet me by the water tonight/Would you please fall asleep holding my hand?" you'd be a fool not to cry out, "Which water?! How soon can you get there?"

--**Andrew Hampp**

Batman: Mask of the Phantasm (Warner Bros., 1993) – Batman may seem like little more than some tough-guy, spending most of his time beating up the bad guys, tracking down the bad guys, and so on...but this movie shows us the story of Bruce Wayne and the woman he had once intended to marry. There's romance, mystery...and, of course, some beating-up-of-bad-guys for good measure.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (New Line, 1990)

Casey Jones. Wearer of hockey mask, wielder of the hockey stick, baseball bat, golf club...whatever's on-hand. Beneath the hard, cool "let's-beat-the-crap-out-of-the-bad-guys" exterior, you have a man who has a definite romantic interest in fellow human-tag-along, April O'Neil (Judith Hoag). Granted, the romance comes after the humans meet four mutant turtles, a mutant rat, face a gang of ninjas led by a man calling himself The Shredder, and everyone's fled the city to recuperate. But who wouldn't love spending time at a run-down farmhouse in the country, babysitting mutants?

--**Walt Kneeland**

"Love Jones" - RZA (From *RZA as Bobby Digital in Stereo, V2*, 1998)

"Love Jones" is a song with an imaginative detail of love making. This song has Angel Cake singing, who magnifies the key note and lets her singing come out like a true angel. This woman gives tranquility to the ears as she sings with a passionate and soothing voice.

RZA uses crafty word play throughout the entire song. He vividly uses a fountain, a mountain, and circumference to describe body parts. Then he uses the supreme numbers of the Nation of Gods and Earths to describe rising above perfection. "Love Jones" is poetry in motion when you hear the words along with the instruments playing.

"K-I-S-S-I-N-G" - Nas (from *I Am...*, Sony, 1999) and **"All I Need Is You"** - Cormega (from *Hustler/Rapper*, Body Shop, 2002)

Love is in the air, and these rhymes being put down are like the clouds. These are two songs of romance that I

know of and I'd like to share them with all the love birds out there.

Nas spills out affection on "K-I-S-S-I-N-G." He gives an imaginative description of making love and staying with someone by saying, "Put it way up where her ribs at, her future kids at/ You held out for two weeks longer than these hoodrats/ You precious more precious than lost treasure/ Matter of fact I'm kinda hopin we can stay together." This song also features R Kelly singing some "Na's" and "La's." It's a good song to make passionate and affectionate love to.

Cormega puts it down on the pad vividly like Picasso on the song "All I Need Is You" from the Hustler/Rapper mixtape. He describes his love for someone by stating, "You mentally attached essentially in fact/ What you give is so real you know I had to give it back/How I feel don't even matter, if I ain't expressing/Affection, my mind was infected you healed me." It's romantic and he's telling the girl that she has given him tranquility.

It's a coincidence that these two Queens Bridge rappers have hate for one another (or at least they used to), but they give the ladies the loving they want with these lyrics.

--**Jeremy Porter**

I Hate Valentine's Day by Bennett Madison (Simon Spotlight Entertainment, 2005)

This hilarious book is a survival guide for everyone who despises February 14. The quick and witty read gives single people advice on how to get through the day without feeling like your heart has been run over by a semi-truck. It offers ways to survive a meeting with your ex, suggestions on how to score an emergency date, and non-traditional ways to celebrate the day. So if cupid's arrow missed you this year, sit back, relax and enjoy a good laugh while reading this book.

"**Happy Valentine's Day**" - OutKast (From *The Love Below*, LaFace, 2003)

Andre 3000's song from the standpoint of Cupid and his view of the lack of love in the world today is a fun alternative to the mushy romantic songs you'd normally associate with Valentine's Day. The lyrics make me laugh out loud every time I hear it. "You won't believe in me/but you would fancy leprechauns or groundhogs/No thank you Easter Bunny/There's so much fuss about Santa Claus/but see Cupid will not be defeated." It's a fun mood booster for any day of the year.

--**Lindsay Breece**

The Graduate (MGM, 1967)

What makes this one of the most memorable romances of the 20th Century is that before boy meets girl, boy meets girl's mother and has a month-long affair with her. Dustin Hoffman is Benjamin Braddock, a college grad who is seduced by Mrs. Robinson, a longtime family friend, but then falls in love with her daughter, Elaine. Mrs. Robinson does everything in her power to keep them apart, even reveal their affair to her daughter and husband. But Benjamin's love for Elaine and determination to be with her leads up to an unforgettable wedding intrusion.

Wild at Heart (MGM, 1990)

Love, David Lynch-style. Nicholas Cage plays Sailor, an Elvis-like ex-con who starts dating Lula, played by Laura Dern. Lula's mother disapproves of Sailor and after they run away together to California, she hires a killer to get rid of him. On their journey, Sailor and Lula talk about all the typical romantic mushy stuff, like what brand of cigarettes their mothers smoke, and encounter an array of other strange characters. The film contains all the necessities of a touching romance: a road trip, spooning, cigarettes after sex and sadistic criminals.

--Allan Lamb

“Buffy The Vampire Slayer” Season 2 (20th Century Fox, 1997-98)

This is for all you lonely hearts out there. After all, who wants to be in a relationship? They sleep with you, turn into a soulless monster, kill your friends and you end up shoving a sword into your significant other's chest to save the world. We've all been there.

Superman & Superman II (Warner Home Video, 1978 & 1980)

Some may say Scarlett and Rhett, some may say Bogie and Bacall, but to me the most touching romance ever to grace the silver screen is Superman and Lois Lane. Heartbreaking and heartwarming at the same time, this is the movie sweeties can enjoy together while snuggling on the couch.

--Robert Taylor

“Moondance” - Van Morrison (from *Moondance*, Warner Bros., 1970)

Van Morrison might have one of the raspiest, sexiest voices ever. And it's a little silly; what exactly is a moondance, anyway? Kind of makes you imagine Cher throwing her arms up in front of a giant picture moon. It's the playful soundtrack to a hand-in-hand walk in Chicago streets or down old campus. Plus it's a little too fast for a slow dance — something that should be reserved for a fifth or sixth date. Cause who's actually going to skip together on a first date?

“Maybe I'm Amazed” - Paul McCartney (from *McCartney*, Capitol, 1970)

The song makes me think of my best friend, which is way more romantic than thinking of a boyfriend. It epitomizes the way every man should idolize his woman: “Maybe I'm amazed at the way I really need you.” Plus, the song is an audio slow dance. It starts out the way every slow dance starts out — hesitant. Then the guitar picks up, the drums pick up — cue first kiss. Guitar solo equals serious make-out time, to finish the dance off the same way it started.

--Jaclyn Youhana

Moondance - Van Morrison (Warner Bros., 1970) and ***When The Pawn...*** - Fiona Apple (Columbia, 1999)

For the sweet: Van Morrison's Moondance is hot. Hot because for all the independent, seemingly tough girls I know, not one of them can resist Morrison's gravelly, yet honeyed, voice. The album, specifically “Crazy Love,” “Into the Mystic,” and the title track, is the perfect background for romantics looking for something sweet but not saccharine.

For the salty: All those who've been unlucky in love, listen up. Feel someone else's pain for once in Fiona Apple's When the Pawn... Apple's angst and longing in songs like “Paper Bag” and “I Know” make you feel like you're in a bad relationship that's oh-so-painfully good.

Grosse Pointe Blank (Buena Vista, 1997)

What better for Valentine's Day than a story of lost love, redemption and hitmen? Enter Grosse Pointe Blank, the movie that asks “Where are all the good men dead, in the heart or in the head?” and “Do you have to do post-graduate work to be a hitman?”

The chemistry between assassin Martin (John Cusack) and his high-school sweetheart Debi (Minnie Driver) is palpable. The problem is that Martin ditched her ten years ago on prom night. Add a high school reunion, two overzealous federal agents and a killer competitor to the mix and you have the perfect Valentine's blend

of sarcasm, romance and action.

--**Sarika Jagtiani**

Page 1 of 1

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