

Guilt & Pleasure: A Conversation

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Pleasure: I understand you've flown in just for this interview.

Guilt: From Ft. Lauderdale.

P: You live there?

G: Half the year. And six months in Rome.

P: Why Rome and south Florida?

G: If you have to ask that, you really don't understand my line of work.

P: I just would've thought you'd be more at home in Germany or Rwanda or Crawford, Texas.

G: Sadly, no. (pause) I suppose you live somewhere nice.

P: Weehawken.

G: Jersey?

P: That's the cool thing about *being* pleasure. Wherever I go, there I am.

G: Good for you.

- P: So I wanted to start by asking you about something Duke Ellington is supposed to have said, that there are only two kinds of music: good and bad.
- G: I've always been drawn to the other kind. On the flight out here, I listened to Terry Riley's, "You're No Good," twice.
- P: If memory serves, that's a pretty long piece.
- G: A little over twenty minutes. It's a minimalist-disco plunderphonics-re-mix of a 60s soul song. The categories of good and bad don't quite capture it. Nor are they much use helping me get a handle on Bride of No-No's "At The Stranglehold Ballet," or Julius Eastman's "Evil Nigger."
- P: That stuff doesn't really turn me on. What do you get out of it?
- G: If Alvin Lucier taught us anything, it's that I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. This music is an obligation. I listen to it because I ought to, because it makes me consider its relation to the world and mine to it.
- P: What are you trying to say: that we should stop worrying about what we listen to?
- G: Does that sound like me? Worry is my middle name. Some people save guilt for things like kissing their best friend's girl, or not voting in 2000. They don't waste their guilt on something as inconsequential as music. But, look, I only know how to do one thing. I've done it all my life and it's too late for me to learn a new trade.
- P: I hear you. But you're not talking about Belinda Carlisle or the theme to *Friends*.
- G: That *would* be a waste of guilt. I'm talking about stuff that makes you feel like you were hatched from an egg and share nothing with the rest of humanity.
- P: You're describing abjection.
- G: You say tom-ay-to, I say tom-ah-to.
- P: Is there any such thing as guilty pleasure?

G: That's just sick.

P: I wasn't trying to suggest anything. So, what is it about this music of obligation?

G: Well, for instance, my iPhone alarm clock wakes me up every morning to "Not Moving" by the no wave band, DNA. It sounds like short-circuiting robots at a square dance. For the life of me, I couldn't tell you if it's good or bad. But I know one thing: it sure as hell wakes me up.