

## Artist Statement

Julia E. Marshall is a cartoonist and singer-songwriter from Los Angeles, CA. She graduated from the Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, OR in the apocalyptic Autumn of 2020. Her warm and down-to-earth line-based style is influenced by her passions: vintage manga, hardcore punk, and classic video games. Julia expresses her thoughts on music and femininity through comic-based art that emphasizes musical narrative and strong-minded characters. Julia's illustrations are dedicated to anyone who is passionate about comics and music.

Over ten years ago, Julia developed a group of three characters who perform in a band together called Born Too Late. She features her imagined band throughout her comics, short stories, and illustrations. These characters include Ronda "the Rebel" on vocals and guitar, Melvie "the Misfit" on vocals, and Chip "Don't Trip" on drums. With Born Too Late, Julia weaves songwriting and music theory into her comic pages, emphasizing how music should also be enjoyed for its visual qualities. Born Too Late encapsulates Julia's inspirations and past experiences, as well as her goals and dreams for the future of music. Like playing an instrument, kindness needs practice, improvement, and diligence. Through her cast of characters--who are loyal and inspire each other--Julia shows how comic art, music, and kindness are intertwined.

Her materials of choice include India ink, Bristol paper, and gouache. Digitally, Julia works best in ProCreate and Clip Studio Paint. Her comics are "loud" with bold line art, heavy cross-hatching, and gritty textures. But sometimes, a good cup of tea and her guitar is all the fuel she needs to make comics.

Julia Marshall

Design Arts Thesis I

T 11:00 - 3:00 p.m.

April 2nd, 2020

### **Born Too Late: A Sequential Songbook (Proposal)**

When I listen to a song, I see a story. I imagine the lyrics being spoken by characters, describing what they're going through at the moment. I see a scene; at the very least, I see colors. Even when a song has no words at all, I listen to the chords and melody as a guide for my eye to imagine what is happening. As an example, when I hear a jazz guitar plucking dreamy major seventh chords against a ride cymbal with soft brushes, glistening against a snare drum, I think of a coffee shop in the rain. It was this realization that made me think about how music and comics have much more in common than I had thought. Just like comics, songs are time-based sequential art forms. Music and comics both have different genres, which can provoke different emotions. Both can either be made by one person, or by a group of people. Both can also be composed digitally or traditionally.

Music and cartoons have been a big part of my life since I was very young. I grew up watching classic Disney films and Betty Boop cartoons on VHS tapes—both of which heavily combine music with animation. My heavy interest in music theory was inspired from my dad and one of my favorite YouTubers, 8Bit Music Theory. My dad is a musician, and he has taught me everything I know about music theory. One reason why reading music means a lot to me is because it holds a place in my childhood. My dad would explain to me the beauty of the math within musical notation while we would eat ice cream or play with the cats. Fifteen years later, I would watch 8Bit Music Theory's YouTube videos for the first time and see how everything my dad explained to me—from modes to unusual time signatures—can be used to help illustrate a narrative within a video game. I also noticed at a young age that I have a bit of synesthesia. When I listen to songs, I usually see scenes within a story. At the very least, I see colors (usually based on the color scheme of the album cover).

My favorite comics are usually about music. But when it comes to the actual music within the comic, I'm usually disappointed by watered-down lyrics, backward-facing eighth

notes, and no staff for these eighth notes to rest on (no pun intended). It frustrates me when I see music in comics, but it's usually just shown as a speech bubble laced with scattered eighth notes and a treble clef. These symbols give the reader the illusion of music, but are not serving their purpose in this context. (I have seen one exception, though: there is a panel in Dame Darcy's *Meatcakes* compilation of comics that features handwritten musical notation and lyrics within a speech bubble. It had one of the warmest qualities I had ever seen.)

My favorite graphic novel is *Moonhead and the Music Machine* by Andrew Rae. Published by Nobrow Press in 2014, the story follows Joey Moonhead—a misfit, music-loving teenager with a moon for a head. He builds a guitar/keyboard-hybrid instrument, called the music machine, which literally and emotionally transforms his peers into their true selves after hearing his music. There are a few moments within the graphic novel where Rae uses shapes, patterns, and color palettes to mimic sound in a way that reminds me of how I visualize sounds in music. While these scenes do not specifically show musical notation, they still illustrate sound in a way that I aim to build on in my project.

Aside from music, I would say that my work is heavily inspired by both Japanese anime and American cartoons from the 1990's. My artistic style is influenced by the line-based art of 70's and 80's manga, with cross-hatching meant to reference vintage underground comics. My influences mainly consist of manga-ka and comic artists, specifically Osamu Tezuka, Junji Ito, Go Nagai, Dan DeCarlo, and Jaime Hernandez. Both Osamu Tezuka and Dan DeCarlo drew their characters with warmth, which is something I've always enjoyed most about their character designs. I'm also inspired by the music-influenced ink illustrations of Yuko Shimizu and Gonzo Alonzo.

Additionally, I am inspired by fictional bands such as the Gorillaz and Prözzak. The Gorillaz were created by Blur frontman Damon Albarn and comic artist Jamie Hewlett as a response to the commercialization of mainstream music in the 21st century. Prözzak (a.k.a. Simon and Milo) was created by Philosopher Kings bandmates James McCollum and Jay Levine as a way to resolve an argument. Both duos' bands successfully combine strong visuals and likeable characters with stellar music.

I am curious how musicians feel when they see music represented in comics. Does it matter whether or not the music is legible, or is the overall impression of music what's most important? For my senior thesis project, I propose to create a sequential songbook—a collection of comics based on five songs I have personally written. Each comic will be a visual representation of each chosen song's story, and will include each song's lyrics and musical notation. Combining songwriting with sequential art will emphasize the similarities between both forms of storytelling.

As technology continues to advance in the new decade, the music and sounds we hear in everyday life are taken for granted—especially since we can hear any recording we want to hear with one click of a button. By “drawing” sounds within comics, a soundless medium, my hope is that my project will encourage whoever reads this visual playlist to think about the stories *they* see within any song. By using different lines, fonts, and color palettes to mimic sounds, this project is meant to be seen as music appreciation tool and not as a teaching tool.

This project is going to be a 9” x 12” paperback comic book, and will consist of five songs I have written over the past six years. The overall tones I am aiming for with this project are warm and nostalgic, to communicate the feelings I associate with my love of music and vintage manga. By handwriting the musical notation and lyrics of each song, I am hoping to show how written music can be just as visually stunning as action in a comic book. My intended audiences are musicians, music students, and manga enthusiasts. However, I hope this project connects with anyone who loves music and vintage manga. I would also like to encourage anyone who reads this short series of comics to pick up an instrument and play along with the music while reading each page.

Each panel will include a written musical phrase, either above or in a speech bubble. Each comic within my sequential songbook will be a panel-by-panel accompaniment with the musical notation and lyrics of each song. The lyrics and musical notation will be within the speech bubbles and caption boxes of each panel. Additionally, I will use musical symbols to suggest how the story is meant to be read. For example, if I put a fermata above a panel at the end, I will be asking that the reader looks at this panel a little longer. By exploring themes of

synesthesia, the color palette and illustrative styles of each comic will be influenced by each song within the playlist. Each comic will *look* like an individual song itself.

I will draw each page on 11" x 14" sketch paper, using an HB pencil. I will ink each page using waterproof India ink, fountain dip pens, and Micron pens. I will then scan each page at 600 dpi into Photoshop, where I will AirDrop them into my iPad and color each page in ProCreate. I will spend my time from now until May writing the musical notations and lyrics for each of my songs in my sheet music journal; additionally, I will sketch my characters' actions for each scene. Starting in May, I will create rough plans for each song. These will include how many pages each comic will need, visual themes that will be explored, as well as placement for where the lyrics and written music will be. From June to August, I will organize page layouts and thumbnails for each comic. August will be my month for pencilling each page and developing a mock book layout. In September, I will ink and tone each page using India ink and Bristol paper. October will be spent digitally coloring each page. The final project will be printed in a paperback 9"x12" comic illustration book. In November, my book layout will be finalized and sent to printers. This book will be an interactive part of an installation, which will take place in December. Each hand-drawn page—as well as each digitally-colored page—will be pinned side-by-side on walls within a gallery space. These pages will be 11"x14". As part of the installation, I will perform each of these songs live in front of an audience, with my voice and guitar.

I have previously made short comics based on my favorite songs by musicians that have inspired me. Four years prior to attending PNCA, I made a seven-page comic based on "We're Going to Be Friends" by the White Stripes. Each panel followed each verse, and I added additional story elements based on my interpretations of this song. Since beginning my first semester at PNCA, my work has mainly focused on themes of music and femininity. One of my earliest projects was a large ink drawing that featured a personification of pop music stomping on a giant brain. Last year, I did a gouache painting of a woman's chest that mimicked an LP turntable, with knobs that adjusted her speed and volume. In addition, I drew a two-page comic based on "I Took a Pill in Ibiza" by singer-songwriter Mike Posner. My most recently completed project was a three-page comic based on the song "She" from Green Day's *Dookie* album. On each page, I pencilled and inked the musical notation and lyrics of the song within each panel.

Each panel ping-ponged between showing my characters performing the song, as well as visual translations of the lyrics. This project was a warm-up toward how I visualize combining my comics with my own songs.

I began drawing comics and writing songs during my later teenage years. Specifically, my comics and art usually focus on my three original characters whom I have been drawing since I was in middle school: Ronda the Rebel, Melvie the Misfit, and Chip “don’t trip”. They are three close friends who perform in a band together called Born Too Late. All three of their personalities compliment each other, and I would say that they are each personalized summaries of myself, as well as people and art in my life which have inspired me. All three of my characters reflect myself, my dreams, people in my life who inspire me, and my favorite characters.

I have been drawing Chip and Ronda since I was in sixth grade. However, I really began to develop their characters when I was in high school. One of the reasons why high school was so difficult for me was because most of my friends and I were jerks to each other. Most of my friends liked to exclude other people; I also didn’t care about things like who’s-dating-who and social media drama. Sometimes I would ask myself: who would I rather be eating lunch with right now? Ronda, Chip, and Melvie are young adults whom I wish I knew in high school; they are warm-hearted, ambitious, and easygoing.

My songs, on the other hand, are reflections of my insecurities and life experiences. When I play them, it’s always just me singing and my guitar. When it comes to songwriting, I’ve noticed that I have two main sources of inspiration: guys whom I’ve dated, and my insecurities. However, my lyrics are meant for everyone who hears them: my friends, my family, and even my future family.

As for my insecurities, I’ve had obsessive-compulsive disorder and depression since I was eight years old. I also have low self-esteem, which I express in my songs. Many people tell me that I’m “too nice” or “too polite”, which sometimes concerns me. I do my best to be kind and warm each day. But I worry that when people tell me I’m “too nice” or “too polite”, they think I’m being disingenuous. I’m also a late bloomer, I don’t like how my body looks, and I feel like I’m five years behind from where I should be by now in my life.

Maybe someday, my own fictional band—Born Too Late—will have their own set of animated music videos. But until then, I plan to draw them performing in this set of comics where I experiment with different visual styles and textures to illustrate music and sound. In a way, viewers might enjoy the experience of reading a sequential song comic more than watching a music video, because it will be up to their imagination what the music sounds like. Drawing my own characters and writing my own songs have both comforted me throughout the high and low points of my life. My dream is that my audience will feel comforted by my characters' adventures, and that my songs will be relatable.

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## Thesis Abstract

Julia E. Marshall's sequential songbook, *Born Too Late*, is a 24-page single-issue comic that combines elements of sheet music with comic pages. The comic focuses on a band called Born Too Late, and showcases them performing three songs: "Sunshine In My Mind", "Butterflies", and "I've Got No Reason". Julia wrote these three songs for vocals and acoustic guitar in her mid-20's. Their lyrics focus on her insecurities at the time, her thoughts about romantic relationships, and her feelings of isolation in a busy world.

This sequential songbook consists of three parts: character introductions, song-based illustrations, and fictional gig posters. Each character introduces themselves before each song, and explains why they feel whether or not they were "born too late". These reasons range from missing the chance to see certain bands perform live, to having a crush on someone unattainable at the time.

The first two songs in the sequential songbook are two-page spread illustrations, with the staff lines and lyrics in the background. The last song is a five-page comic that weaves musical notation and lyrics into the panels. The panels and the written music work together and compliment each other, creating a print form of an animated music video.

There are four fictional gig flyers featured in the songbook. These flyers are inspired by psychedelic rock flyers from the 1960s, as well as flyers for backyard punk shows. The theme of the first two flyers is "Matcha Madness", and the theme for the last two flyers is "Busking". This is to showcase Born Too Late's local gigs performing at coffee shops, as well as busking. This was also an opportunity to experiment with poster design and typography.

At the end of this book, there is a page that explains basic music theory terms. However, this book is not meant to be seen as an educational tool. It is a three-song EP in comic form, with illustrations as songs. It also introduces audiences to a fictional band that will be featured in future comics and illustrations. This book is for music enthusiasts and comic fans, as well as anyone who is passionate about narrative.

Julia Marshall  
Design Arts Thesis II  
Fall 2020  
December 10th, 2020

## Sequential Songbook Thesis Defense Speech

Hello everyone. Thank you all for being here this afternoon for my thesis defense. My name is Julia Marshall. I am an illustration senior at PNCA with a focus in sequential art. Outside of school, I write my own songs and create comics featuring my fictional band, Born Too Late. For my senior thesis project, I combined my passions for cartooning and songwriting and created a 24-page sequential songbook. This is a single-issue comic and sheet music hybrid, which introduces my band and showcases them performing three of my songs.

My journey with songwriting and music theory began with my dad. He is a musician, and introduced me to what would become my favorite music while I was growing up. To this day, whenever I tell him about a classic song I like, he dives into detail about *why* it's a timeless song. However, sometimes he'd use fancy terms that I didn't always know, like "appoggiatura". Still, understanding these music theory terms resolved any mystery behind what makes a song sound "good".

In addition to my dad's advice throughout the years, I am a fan of 8-Bit Music Theory's videos on YouTube. Their videos go into detail about music in video games. Each video takes my dad's advice a step further, as 8-Bit explains these music theory terms and shows how they add to the visual narrative within the game. My favorite songs are the ones that tell stories--not just through lyrics, but through chord progressions and song structures. When I write songs, I keep in mind what I want people to *see* when they hear them. So, I plan out my chord progressions in a way that will create an overall mood.

Whenever I visit a bookstore, I gravitate towards comics and graphic novels about music. On the flip side of hearing music that helps me visualize a story, I enjoy reading comics where I can imagine the background music and sound effects just by looking at its line art and textures. In *Josie And The Pussycats (2016-2017) Volume 2*, editor Alex Segura identifies the challenges of making a comic series about music.

You have to use the tools you have available--imagery and words--to give the reader the impression of hearing something. It's doubly hard when the music you're asking them to hear doesn't even exist. (Segura, 2018, p.3)

Whenever I read comics that have music in them, I find myself let down with the way that the music is portrayed. Music in comic pages is usually portrayed as cliché lyrics in speech bubbles, sprinkled with random eighth notes and treble clefs. I feel like this is very rushed and dismissive of the visual aspect of written music. Music theory has a reputation for being tedious and unnecessary, but studying music theory on and off since I was a kid has given me a deeper

understanding of why I'm passionate about music. I also want to explore and show how written music should also be appreciated as sequential art.

There's something about fictional bands that resonates with audiences just as much--if not more--as with bands in real life. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the animated duo Prözzak took over the pop music scene in Canada. Their songs about heartache and partying resonated with Canadian teenagers. Sometime after Prözzak's popularity, musician Damon Albarn and illustrator Jamie Hewlett created Gorillaz as a response to the disingenuous pop music industry. This is what Jamie Hewlett once said about watching MTV:

It wasn't the videos as such, it was the bands. They were so phony and manufactured that they were so clearly playing up to it. It was almost as if in order to be a sellable commodity you had to adopt a character also. Which is fine, but why can't they do it well? (Hewlett, 2018, p.107)

My fictional band, Born Too Late, has been brewing in my mind since middle school. During my teenage years, I was painfully awkward and uncomfortable in my own skin. My characters—Ronda Murasaki, Melvie Dumont, and Chip Garcia—are based on people who I wish I knew in high school. I would've liked to have known a group of friends who could've told me, "Hey, even if you think you're awkward, you're not doomed. People love you. You'll get through this." I was also in a band on and off when I was in high school. I thought about pursuing a career as a musician once I graduated, but I didn't like what I was learning about the music industry. In addition to 8-Bit Music Theory, I listen to Finn McKenty's Punk Rock MBA videos on YouTube. And a few of his videos confirmed a truth about today's music that I didn't want to hear: less bands are forming as more young musicians are creating solo projects on TikTok and SoundCloud. This inspired me to literally create my own band. This way, I am starting a band and working independently at the same time, with the possibilities of collaborating with artists and musicians in the future.

Born Too Late is a punk trio, consisting of: Ronda "the Rebel" on guitar and vocals, Melvie "the Misfit" on vocals, and Chip "Don't Trip" on drums. I've been developing these three characters since I was in sixth grade; my first drawing of Ronda and Chip is older now than I was when I first drew them! Inevitably, my characters and I grew up and changed together since my adolescence.

The name, Born Too Late, comes from the song "Missed It" by one of my favorite bands, the Lunachicks. In the second verse of the song, lead singer Theo Kogan belts out, "I was born too late, so I never got to see Jimi Hendrix; I was born too late, so I never got to see Sid Vicious." When I was a teenager, I also was frustrated that I missed out on seeing some of my favorite bands and musicians perform. This frustration is shared and expressed through Born Too Late's guitarist and vocalist, Ronda.

Ronda is based on who I wanted to be when I was about 10 years old. I've always admired women and characters who are strong, independent, and stay true to themselves. Ronda's tough and introverted, but has a heart of gold. She loves music and sees her band as her second family.

Melvie--Born Too Late's singer--is optimistic, emotional, and outgoing. She is a hopeless romantic who loves animals, boba, and K-dramas. Melvie is based on my closest friends, as well as myself—I see my friends' strengths in her, as well as my own insecurities.

And Chip is their drummer. He is shy, down-to-earth, and hardworking. He has more confidence in his friends than he does in himself. He is not easily stressed out, and believes there's a solution to almost everything.

Aside from being passionate about music, the one thing that all three of my characters have in common is that they are romantics. They are loyal to each other, their friends, and their families. But sometimes their big hearts get the best of them, and they set unrealistic expectations for the world around them. As a result, they each have their own individual traits that bring out the best in each other, but could also potentially get on each other's nerves. Ronda is driven to build a career as a musician, where Melvie and Chip see being in a band as another chapter in their lives. She motivates them to give it their all during gigs and rehearsals, and gets irritated when they don't take the band seriously enough. As an intuitive Libra, Melvie senses the chemistry between her two bandmates. Although she cheers for both of them, there are times when she feels a little left out. Additionally, Chip can sometimes feel left out from Ronda and Melvie's conversations about the everyday struggles of being young women. But like a solid drummer, he is supportive and keeps all three of them grounded.

My sequential songbook is organized into three parts: character introductions, songs, and fictional gig flyers. The side-by-side gig posters are influenced by both 60's psychedelic rock flyers, and well as flyers for local backyard punk shows. The psychedelic posters gave me a chance to experiment with typography and shape-based illustration. The punk posters helped me relive my memories of when I first started going to shows. Even though both flyer styles were meant to be very different from each other, I noticed that elements of both styles blended with each other.

Originally, this comic was going to be a 9"x12" paperback book with 5 songs within 48 pages. However, the size was condensed to roughly 6.5"x10" with 3 songs within 24 pages. The reason for this change was that I wanted the book to closely resemble a traditional single-issue comic book. I also felt that a smaller book would feel more personable than a larger book. Additionally, I had originally considered making sequential comics focused on popular songs rather than my own songs. I decided to focus only on my own songs because a) I wanted to avoid any copyright issues with using someone else's songs, and b) I don't have any of my songs formally recorded or written down yet, so I thought this would be a good start.

The last change I made was that I originally planned to complete each page traditionally by pencilling and inking on 11"x14" Bristol paper. Most of the pages did start with a rough pencil sketch in my thesis journal, which was then scanned onto my MacBook. But aside from that, each page was drawn digitally from start-to-finish on my iPad and MacBook. The software that I primarily used were ProCreate, Photoshop, and Clip Studio Paint. The main reason for this change was so that I could complete each page efficiently. With less need for scanning and buying new materials, my time and budget for the songbook were significantly reduced.

Because my songs were originally written for vocals and acoustic guitar, I imagined how each song would sound if my band performed them. I kept this in mind while I sketched and digitally inked each page. The three songs of mine that I included in this comic are called “Sunshine In My Mind”, “Butterflies”, and “I’ve Got No Reason”. I decided that the last song would have musical notation. However, the first two songs were illustrated differently. Instead of writing the notes on the staff lines and spaces with the words underneath, I just placed the words of the song on those lines and spaces instead. This is similar to reading guitar tablature, where the number on a line tells a guitarist which note to play on which fret. Lettering the songs this way lets the reader know which note to sing for each word, and makes singing along with the comic more approachable.

I wrote “Sunshine In My Mind” a few years ago. During that time, I was trying to figure out who I was and what it meant to be an adult. I had a couple falling outs with friends who were problematic, and I felt like I was stuck at a job I didn’t like. Overall, the lyrics summarize how depressed and insecure I felt.

I wrote “Butterflies” about a year later. While I was writing this song, I was confused when I thought about how some of the most warm, funny, and empowering women I know were still single at the time. Even more so, I was upset whenever I heard about a friend--or a friend of a friend--who stuck around with the wrong guy who wasn’t giving them love and respect.

Personally, my favorite part of the song is the bridge. The chord progressions change from A minor, D minor, and E minor to a more dreamlike A major seventh, C major seventh, and G. The A minor chord progression is like a rainy morning, while the A major seventh chord progression is like the sun’s rays peeking out in the afternoon. The lyrics are:

Ladies. If he is a man worthy of your desire, he’ll do the best he can to help you fly higher. And he will admire the beauty of your wings. (Marshall, 2016)

I’d also like to point out that when I write songs, they come from my perspective as a straight, cisgendered woman. However, these lyrics about finding someone who brings out the best in you are what I want to tell everyone, regardless of gender identity and orientation.

The two-page spread for this song is based on a couple of illustrations by Macoto Takahashi. In his illustrations *Linden Blossom* and *Wildrose Romance*, the figure is in front of the musical notation for both songs. The double-page spread for “Butterflies” features Melvie and Ronda performing in front of tablature-style lyrics. I also wrote the chords above the lyrics, in case readers would like to play an instrument while they sing along.

The last song in the sequential songbook is called “I’ve Got No Reason”. I wrote this song last year during the summer of 2019--a year before the country shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and before I *literally* had no reason to leave my house. The song’s lyrics focus on how isolated I felt when I didn’t have plans on a weekend. But then when I would push myself out of the house, and I was surrounded by tons of people I didn’t know, I still felt just as isolated as I did before I left. I would ask myself stuff like, why did I even bother driving for thirty minutes just to spend another five dollars on boba? So I wrote a song about it.

I treated this comic like an illustrated music video. The captions and dialogue are literally written music and lyrics. I placed the notation and lyrics at the top and bottom of each panel. Occasionally, the staff lines curve throughout the page to add more movement. Aside from *Born Too Late*, the main characters of this comic are dolls. This represents how I felt like I was not being totally myself when I would go out and try to meet new people. It also represents the disingenuous vibes I sometimes got from strangers.

One challenge that was discussed in the beginning of my project was how to make this comic accessible to anyone who wants to read it, because not everyone reads music. At the end of the song, I included a double-page spread loosely titled, "Some 'Notes' On Music Theory." This segment explains how to read the musical notation in the song's panels. It is similar to instrument books for beginner music students, and only covers the necessities: treble clefs, lines, spaces, notes, sharps, and flats.

This project is not meant to be seen as an educational tool, but I want this project to connect to an audience passionate about music and narrative. I don't want anyone to feel like they have to read sheet music in order to enjoy this comic, so I experimented with different ways to write music so that it would feel more accessible. I plan to record music that will accompany this book. But for now, it is up to the readers what *Born Too Late*'s music sounds like.

There are a couple of comics that I worked on that prepared me for this project. In 2013, I made a seven-page comic based on "We're Going to Be Friends" by The White Stripes. The comic stars Chip and Ronda when they were both about five years old, and follows their journey together as they get older. There is very little dialogue; each panel follows the lyrics of the song. It's meant to be read while listening to it. I was still developing my characters, and I hadn't decided yet whether or not Chip and Ronda were childhood friends, or if they met later in life. This project was my first self-assigned comic, and took about ten months to complete. I experimented a lot with a variety of materials: bristol paper, india ink, micron pens, markers, colored pencils, and white tape. The first page is actually 7" x 10", while the rest of the pages are 11" x 14". I also made a lot of drawing mistakes too, so there are a couple of pages that are literally cut up and taped together. Overall, it was a learning experience that taught me what NOT to do when making comics.

Last semester, for my Advanced Illustration Studio I class, I did a three-page comic based on the song "She" from Green Day's 1994 album *Dookie*. The comic ranges from the first verse to the second chorus, and each page was inked traditionally with dip pens and 9"x12" sketch paper. The notation and lyrics are the captions and dialogue, and the chords are drawn as sound effects. The comic showcases *Born Too Late* performing the song, with visuals to accompany some of the lyrics; however, there is no story to it.

Because nostalgia is a core theme in *Born Too Late*, my overall style for the series is based on cartoons from the 1990s and early 2000s that I grew up watching when I was in elementary school. One of my favorite cartoons at the time was *My Life As A Teenage Robot*, created by Rob Renzetti. While the characters in the show were modeled after Max Fleischer's cartoons in the 1930s, the backgrounds of the show were modeled after the art deco movement in

the 1920's. There's an episode where Jenny--the main character--loses her english-language disc, and she can only speak Japanese. This was my first time hearing spoken Japanese, and I decided I wanted to learn the language. When I started reading manga and watching anime in middle school, I learned how to read and write in hiragana and katakana. I also began to learn more about manga and Japanese art.

Something that always inspires me when I read vintage manga or watch classic anime is that I always feel immersed in the environment I'm seeing. Scott McCloud discusses this major difference between western storytelling and eastern storytelling in his educational graphic novel, *Understanding Comics*.

Traditional *western* art and literature doesn't *wander* much. On the whole, we're a pretty *goal-oriented culture*. But, in the *east*, there's a *rich tradition of cyclical and labyrinthine* works of art. Japanese comics may be *heirs* to this tradition, in the way they so often emphasize *being there* over *getting there*. (McCloud, 1993, p.86)

Ten years ago, I read two manga serieses from the 1970s and 1980s that pushed me to draw my own comics: *Black Jack* by Osamu Tezuka, and *Oishinbo* by Tetsu Kariya and Akira Hanasaki. *Black Jack* is about an anti-hero who is the world's greatest surgeon. He travels all over the world with his adopted daughter, Pinoko, to operate and cure all kinds of obscure diseases with his God-like skills. The series deals with heavy themes that question what it means to be human. *Black Jack* is heavily-detailed about medicine, diseases, and what it's like to be a physician. *Oishinbo*, on the other hand, is a much more light-hearted series. It's about the Arts and Culture department of a newspaper that tries food at different restaurants and events. It is a heavily-detailed series about cooking, food, and falling in love. While ideating *Born Too Late* in high school, I thought to myself, "What if I created a series of comics that was heavily detailed about music?"

Another Japanese artist whose work has always inspired me is Yoshitomo Nara. Nara is famous for his energetic paintings of moody young girls playing guitar, smoking cigarettes, and swearing. Nara's paintings and drawings also feature lyrics by bands including the Ramones and Social Distortion. His paintings and sculptures unite punk music with painting. Not only do Nara's paintings have the raw energy and movement of punk music, but the punk ethos of D.I.Y. culture and anti-commercialism guide his artistic conscience when he makes and markets his work. Nara's motto is "never forget your beginner's spirit". When I draw, I let go of my insecurities when it comes to perspective and anatomy, and remind myself *why* I love to draw. I remind myself of my values and what I want to tell my audience. The doll in "I've Got No Reason" is loosely based on the girls in Nara's paintings.

In addition to vintage manga, I was heavily influenced by Dan DeCarlo's and Jaime Hernandez's comics. Dan DeCarlo was a cartoonist and illustrator who was most famous for giving Archie Comics its iconic style, as well as for illustrating pin-up pages. Whenever I look at Osamu Tezuka's or Dan DeCarlo's comic pages, I always admire how their characters were drawn with such warmth that they glow off the page. I draw my characters with the same warmth

by applying my vulnerabilities and life experiences through their gestures and facial expressions when I draw them.

Jaime Hernandez's comics have always inspired me for several reasons. The young women in his comics are strong, fierce, and independent. He also draws a variety of body types throughout his pages, making figure drawing look effortless. A significant theme in Hernandez's comics is the punk scene in Los Angeles during the 1980's. Because I love underground punk—and I'm from Los Angeles—this is also what drew me to Hernandez's work. Hernandez's strong silhouettes and his uses of hatching to create different textures have also influenced my inking habits.

Three thanksgivings ago, I read the graphic novel *Moonhead and the Music Machine* by Andrew Rae. The graphic novel is about Joey--a teenager with a moon for a head who is driven to build his own instrument and become a musician. This graphic novel is a visual love letter to rock 'n' roll music. In addition to instruments, recording studios, and Joey's massive record collection, Rae illustrates music with bright colors, geometric shapes, and blob-like waves. I also enjoy how down-to-earth his character designs are; he draws unusual characters without cartoony, exaggerated poses.

As a whole, each of these comics motivated me to develop a mostly black-and-white line-based style with silhouettes and heavy cross-hatching. During my seven semesters at PNCA, I have also experimented with digital painting and working more with shaped-based drawing. I have also become much more comfortable with illustrating digitally. Through trial and error, my digital illustrations now look more traditionally hand-drawn than they did three years ago.

From Walt Disney's 1940 feature film *Fantasia* to Katy Perry's *The Smile Video Series* in 2020, music and visual art have a history of complimenting each other, working together, and being enjoyed simultaneously. While I currently don't have the team or budget to create animated music videos for *Born Too Late*, I am my own team as I create comics with music notation. In comparison with watching an animated music video on a phone, the best part about having a sequential songbook is the portability. A comic book doesn't need to be charged, and it doesn't show pop-up notifications that distract from the experience.

I see this project taking on several paths. When convention centers reopen, I will table at artist alleys and sell my self-published comics. I will also reach out to independent galleries throughout Los Angeles--such as Gallery Nucleus and Q Pop--and ask about selling my self-published comics within their spaces. I also plan to have a hybrid exhibition and concert within a gallery space, where my comic pages will be displayed behind glass on the walls, and a set of live local bands will perform on opening night.

As a singer-songwriter myself, I plan to bring my sequential comics with me to future gigs. At my merch table, I will sell my handmade comics alongside other swag, including patches and pins. Aside from gigs, I will self-publish my comics and sell them through independent bookstores, galleries, and digital comic outlets such as ComiXology.

I recently learned about a company named Vinyl Moon Co. Vinyl Moon's mission is to provide people who are passionate about music and art with the most unique vinyl experience



ever. Members receive a “mixtape” of ten different musicians on the same colored vinyl disc. The album covers are works of art which range from comics to a series of screenprints. I plan to pitch my illustrations and songs to Vinyl Moon, and see if they would be interested in collaborating on future projects.

An hour on Instagram makes me feel exhausted and depressed. An hour playing guitar makes me feel motivated and inspired. I’m not the only one who feels this way. Ronda, Melvie, and Chip are three teenagers who are aware and afraid of their cell phones consuming their lives. So they start a band, where they can sing and strum about their frustrations instead of just posting about it.

I would like to thank my mentor, Jason, for being the best and for guiding me throughout this project. I’d like to thank my instructors and friends at PNCA. Your kindness and advice means more to me than I can tell you. I hope I get to work with you all again sometime soon. I’d like to thank Kara for being a designated gremlin I can always count on. I’d like to thank my close friends and my family for your love and support. And most importantly, I’d like to thank my mom and dad. I love you both so much. You always inspire me, and I’d be nowhere without you.

And lastly, thank YOU all for being here this afternoon.

Now, I would like to open up the panel for questions.

## **Julia Marshall**

### **Illustration**

#### **Creative Brief**

##### **Project Vision:**

My goal with this project is to intertwine elements of sheet music into comics. Even though sheet music and comics are both different mediums, they are both time-based forms of visual storytelling. The way that music is often visually represented is rushed, and does not capture how the music itself within the comic would sound if it were to be played in real life.

##### **Audience:**

My target audience is adults between the ages of 18 to 30 years old. Specifically, this project will be aimed toward adults who are passionate about music. I don't want anyone to feel like they have to read sheet music in order to read this comic, so I experimented with different ways to write music so that it would look more accessible.

##### **Methods and Materials**

I worked on each page while using ProCreate on my iPad. The brushes that I mainly used for inking and coloring were the Rusty Nib Inker brushes from True Grit Texture Supply. Additional tools that I used included a few pencilled sketchbook pages, as well as Adobe Creative Suite applications on my MacBook.

##### **Comparative Media**

I mainly looked at Moonhead and the Music Machine by Andrew Rae as an example for how I wanted each page to look. Moonhead has vivid colors and various characters' expressions to show how the music sounds, which inspired me to consider the color palettes and my characters' emotions on each page.

##### **Marketplace Application**

I can see my sequential songbook being marketed either within an independent bookstore, music store, or small gallery. As for online opportunities, I would like to either have my sequential songbook on an app-based platform such as Comixology or Webtoon. Webtoon could potentially work best, because I could include music with each page.

Julia Marshall  
Design Arts Thesis  
Fall 2020  
December 11th, 2020

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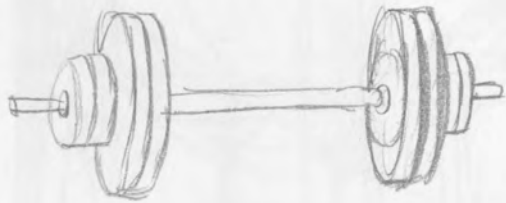
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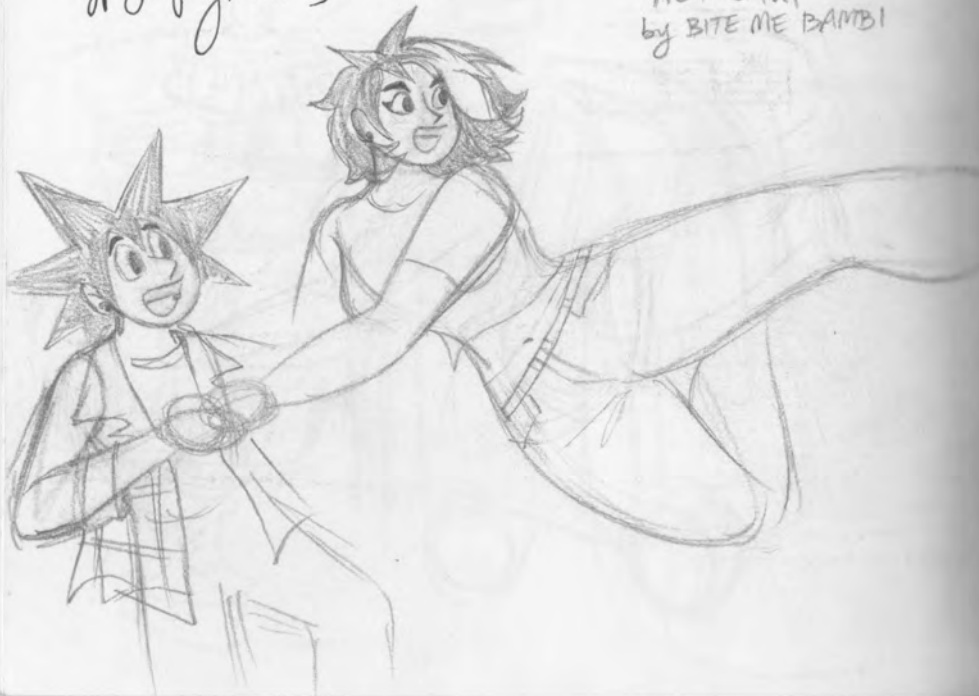
- feel free to bring printed comics to class!
- \* IDEA!!! riot hrrr! band, the Heavy Burdens



Portfolio:

- too different styles, guide through portfolio, sections
- typography, letters

"HOT LAVA"  
by BITE ME BAMBI



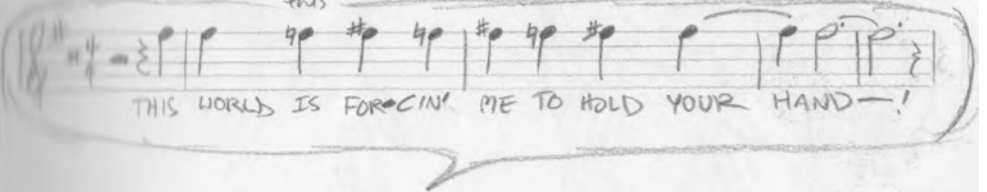
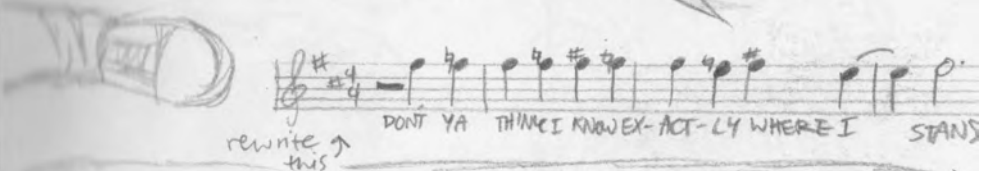
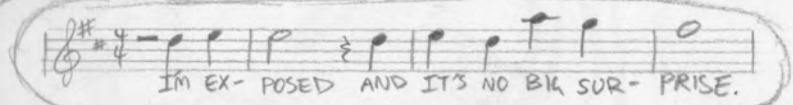
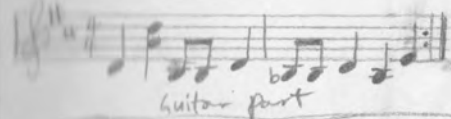
1940 - ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE

1960

9 from the 90's

- \* Double Dare Ya
- \* Just a Girl
- \* Candy
- \* Close To You (cover)
- \* Electricity, Electricity

"JUST A GIRL"

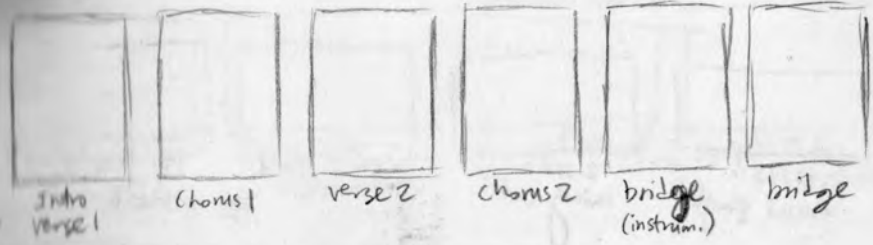


"I JUST WANNA BE A CANARY"

FINAL PLAYLIST:

- 1.) "JUST A GIRL" by No Doubt
- 2.) "I WANT TO GROW UP" by Colleen Hearn
- 3.) "CANARY" by Liz Phair
- 4.) "MISSED IT" by the Lunachicks

Source: "Just a girl" sheet music  
words & music by Gwen Stefani,  
Thomas Dunetz & Eric Stefani

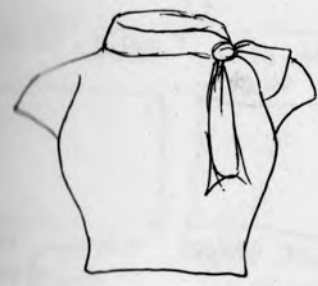


8 pages total!

COLOR PALETTE: ORANGE, PINK, BLUE SATURATED



*just a girl*





48 pages  
(whole book)

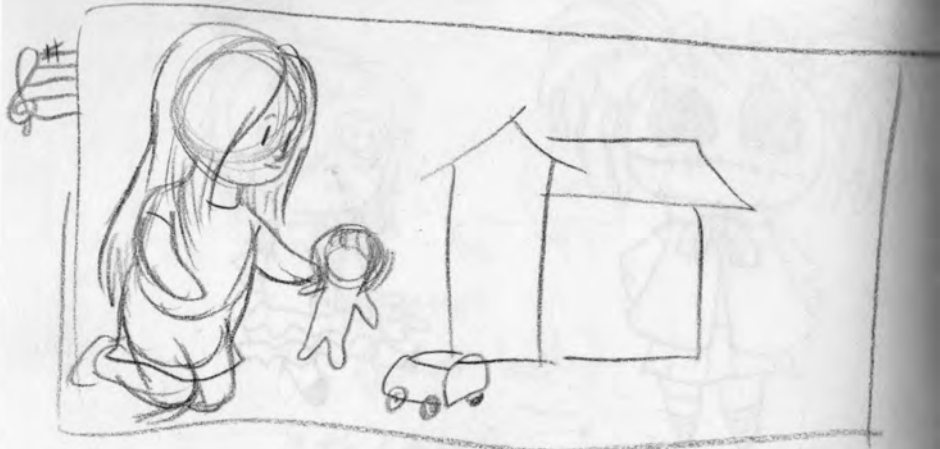
"I've Got No Reason"

- Lib's doll
- Pillow's "bodybird girl" music video
- Barbie
- coffee shop
- art gallery
- cute bathroom
- marionettes
- Volvox dolls (NOT CGI!!)





# I'VE GOT NO REASON



DRUMS

I'VE GOT NO REASON TO GO OUT TO-NIGHT



WELL I WOULD GO OUT BECAUSE I COULD



GO OUT BECAUSE I SHOULD

BUT I DON'T FEEL GOOD ENOUGH...

6/12/2020

NEW THESIS SCHEDULE:

- JUNE: Rough sketches for each page.
- JULY: Bring roughs to tight pencils. Rough Covers.
- AUGUST: inking & hatching pgs 1-36.
- SEPT: coloring & continue hatching pgs 1-36. InDesign layout.
- OCT: Finalize layout & send to printers. Practice presentation + performance.
- NOV: Receive books. Practice & refine presentation.

Thesis Meeting w/ Jason:

- beat sheet  
  Option for what happens every page
- Don't start w/ pg. 1; start on pg. 20
- Comixology
- Camper Van Beethoven
- Stogee's Funhouse
- Thesis Dining: all orders



BORN  
TOO  
LATE

BORN  
TOO  
LATE

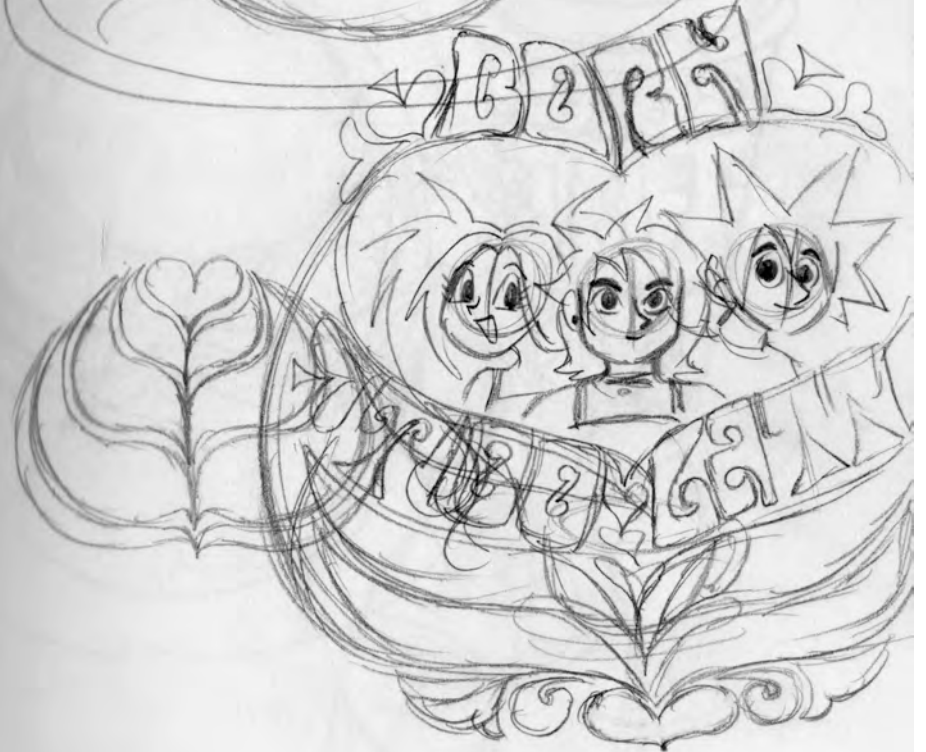
born  
too  
late

BORN  
TOO  
LATE

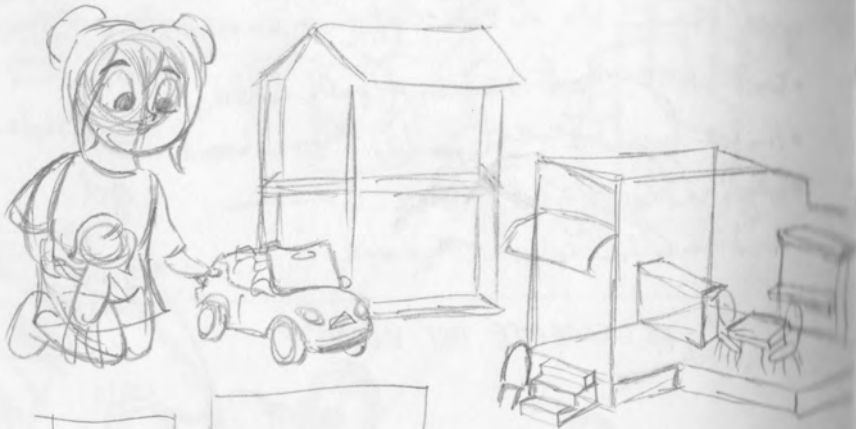


BORN  
TOO  
LATE

BORN  
TOO  
LATE







DIY  
TEA BAR  
IDEAS:



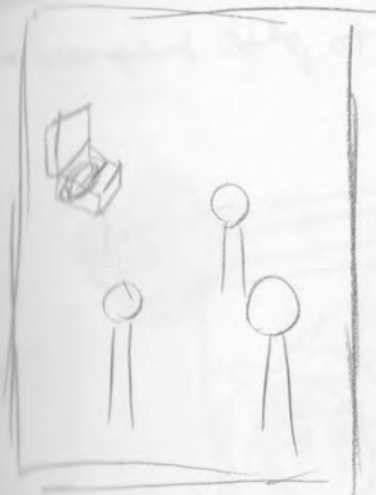


- facilities: printing, scanners, computers
- completely remote after Thanksgiving
- Adv. Illustration will continue
- "definite YES!!!! I can stay home!!"
- add border to match the markers
- moodcap - good for printing, postcards
- [kickstarter]
- This week
- [pg. 5 range]
- [finish all 5]
- [put all into drive]
- ~~Monday~~
- Mondays @ 2!
- The specials

### clip studio:

- ☀ = deletes (within selection)
- ☐☀ = deletes outside of selection
- Ctrl D = deselect
- layer properties → monochrome = makes aliased edges handier
- shape-lasso: you can choose # of corners to change shape
- W = magic wand tool
- "close gap" tool w/ paintbucket
- area scaling for coloring





RECORD

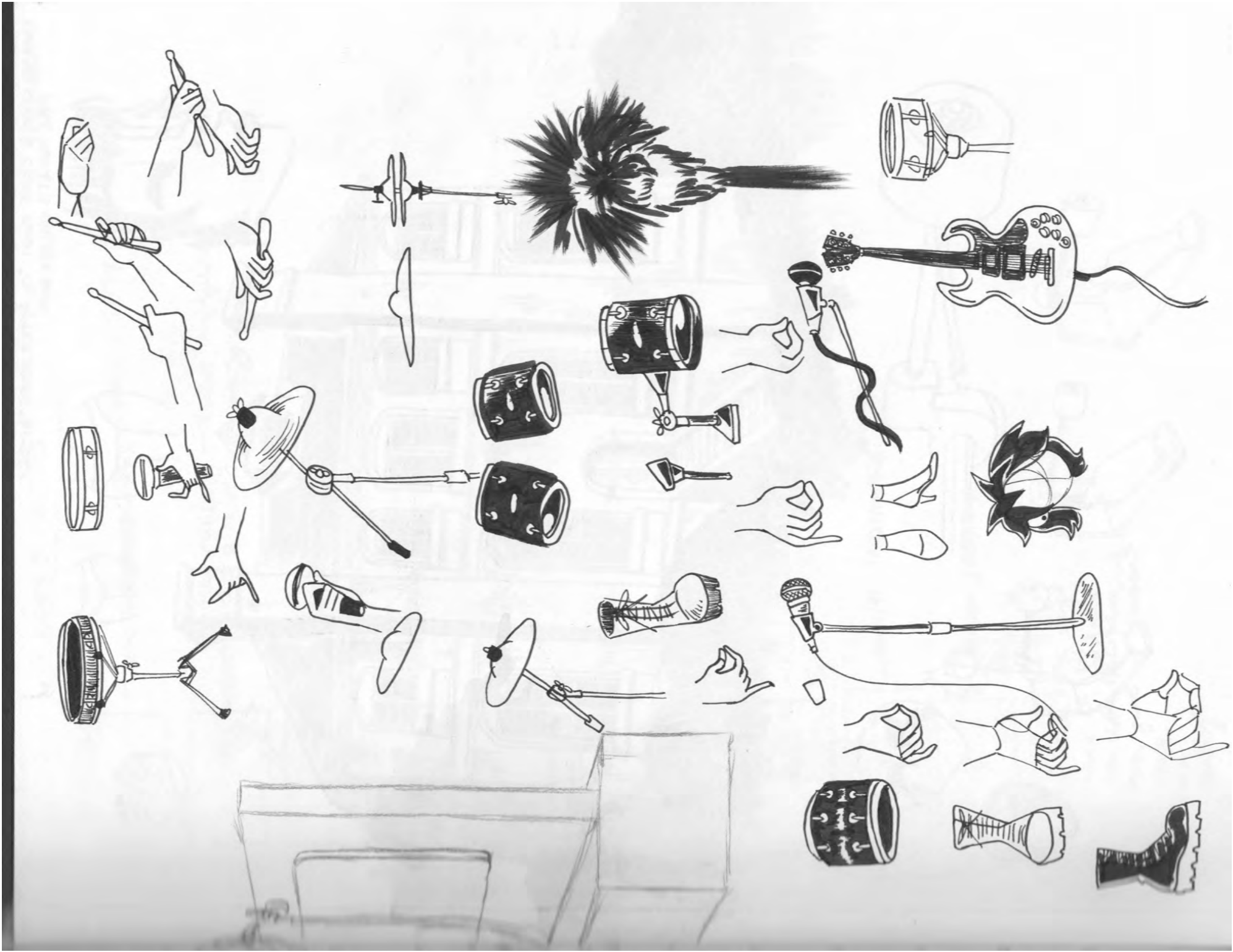


clock



SLASH PAGES



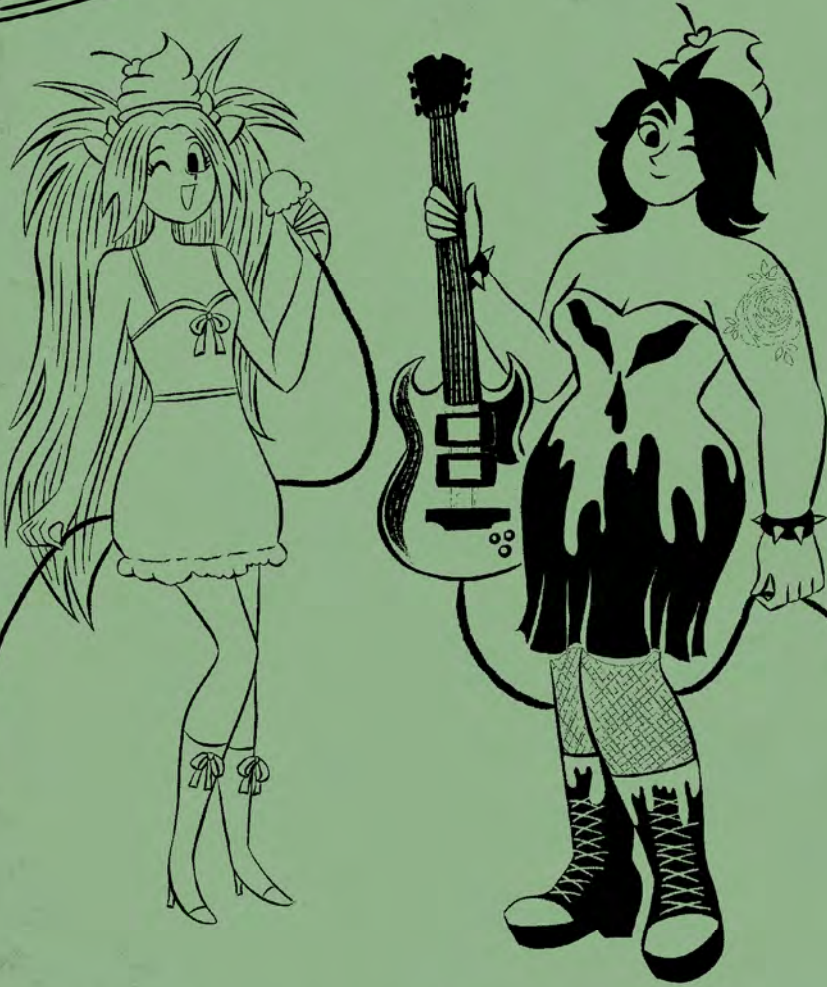





# BORN TOO LATE

BY JULIA E. MARSHALL





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NO PARTS MAY BE REPRODUCED IN ANY FORM OR BY ANY  
ELECTRONIC MEANS, INCLUDING INFORMATION STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL  
SYSTEMS, WITHOUT PERMISSION IN WRITING FROM THE AUTHOR,  
EXCEPT BY REVIEWERS, WHO MAY USE BRIEF SAMPLES IN A REVIEW.



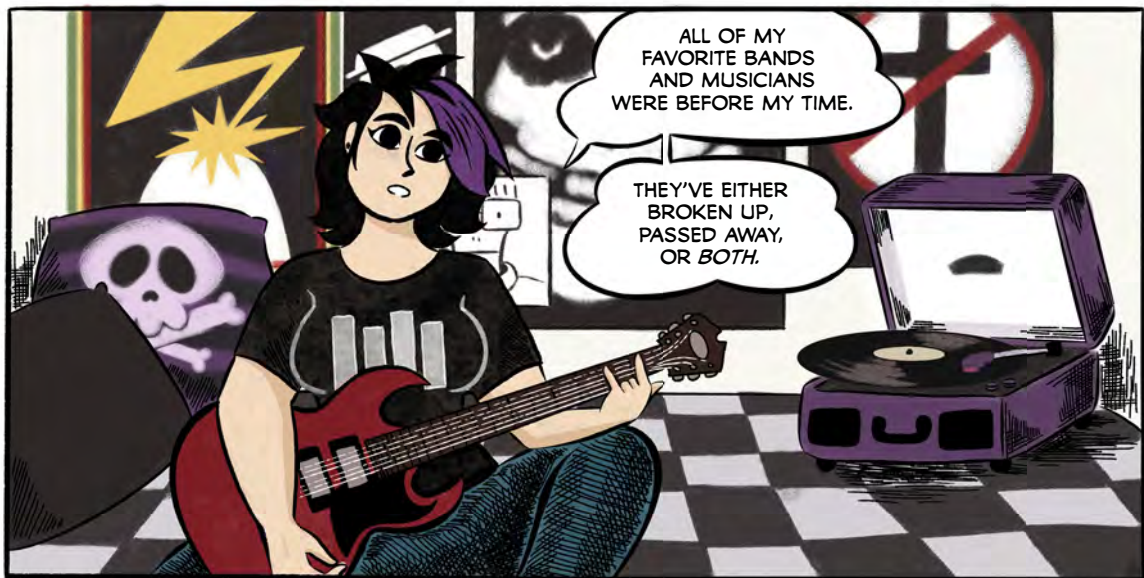
# SET LIST

- 1.) RONDA'S INTRO
  - 2.) SUNSHINE IN
  - 3.) MELVIE'S <sup>♡</sup> MY MIND INTRO
  - 4.) BUTTERFLIES
  - 5.) CHIP'S INTRO
  - 6.) (I'VE GOT) NO REASON
  - 7.) SOME "NOTES" ON MUSIC THEORY
- 
- 

MY NAME  
IS RONDA...

...AND I WAS  
**BORN TOO  
LATE.**







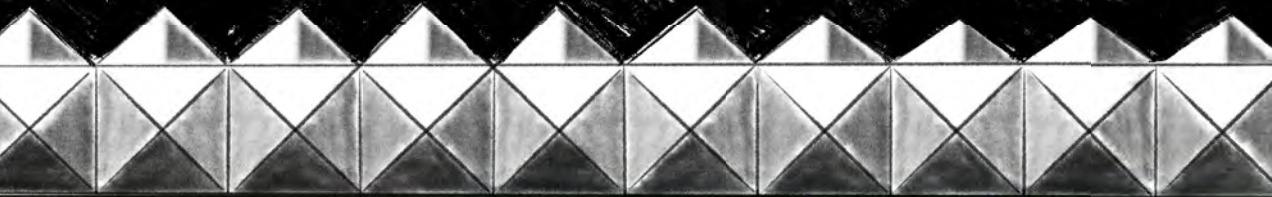
that-I was dead  
 NOW I-wish mes-sing-with my head  
 Right  
**Amaj7**  
 WORLD keeps dream  
 This  
 just lay in bed and  
 And I wan-na

**Amaj7**  
 DON'T al-ways know what to  
 THINGS don't al-ways go  
 say and  
 my way

ple ways seem...  
 And are not as they



# BORN TOO LATTÉ



SOLID  
GROUNDS  

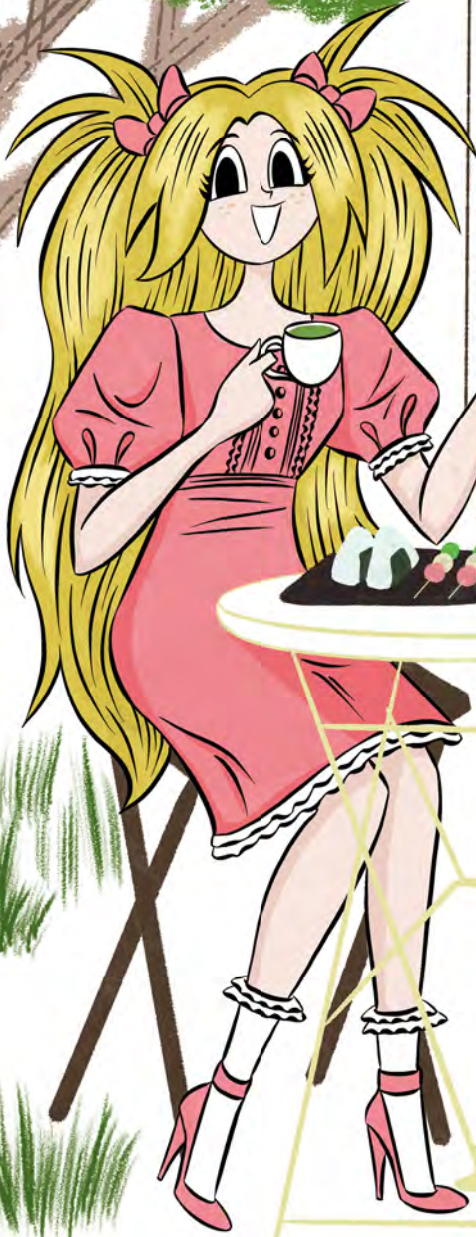



FRIDAYS  
5PM





HI! I'M MELVIE!  
AND I WAS  
BORN TOO LATE.



WHEN I WAS IN EIGHTH GRADE,  
I WALKED DOWN TO THE  
LOCAL SODA FOUNTAIN  
EVERY FRIDAY AFTER SCHOOL!



BUT IT WASN'T JUST THE ICE CREAM  
THAT I LOOKED FORWARD TO SEEING...

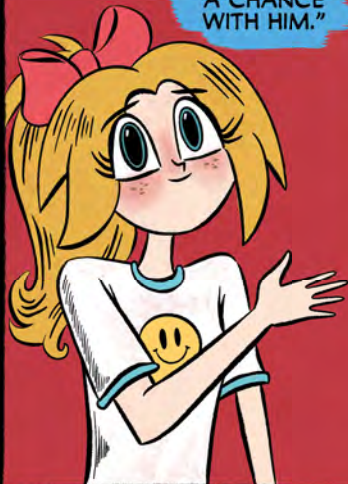
HIS NAME WAS SEAN. HE WAS SHY  
AND HANDSOMELY MYSTERIOUS.

HE WAS  
ALSO  
EIGHTEEN  
YEARS  
OLD.

I REMEMBER  
THINKING,  
"IF ONLY  
I COULD BE  
JUST FIVE  
YEARS  
OLDER..."



"...THEN MAYBE  
I'D HAVE  
A CHANCE  
WITH HIM."

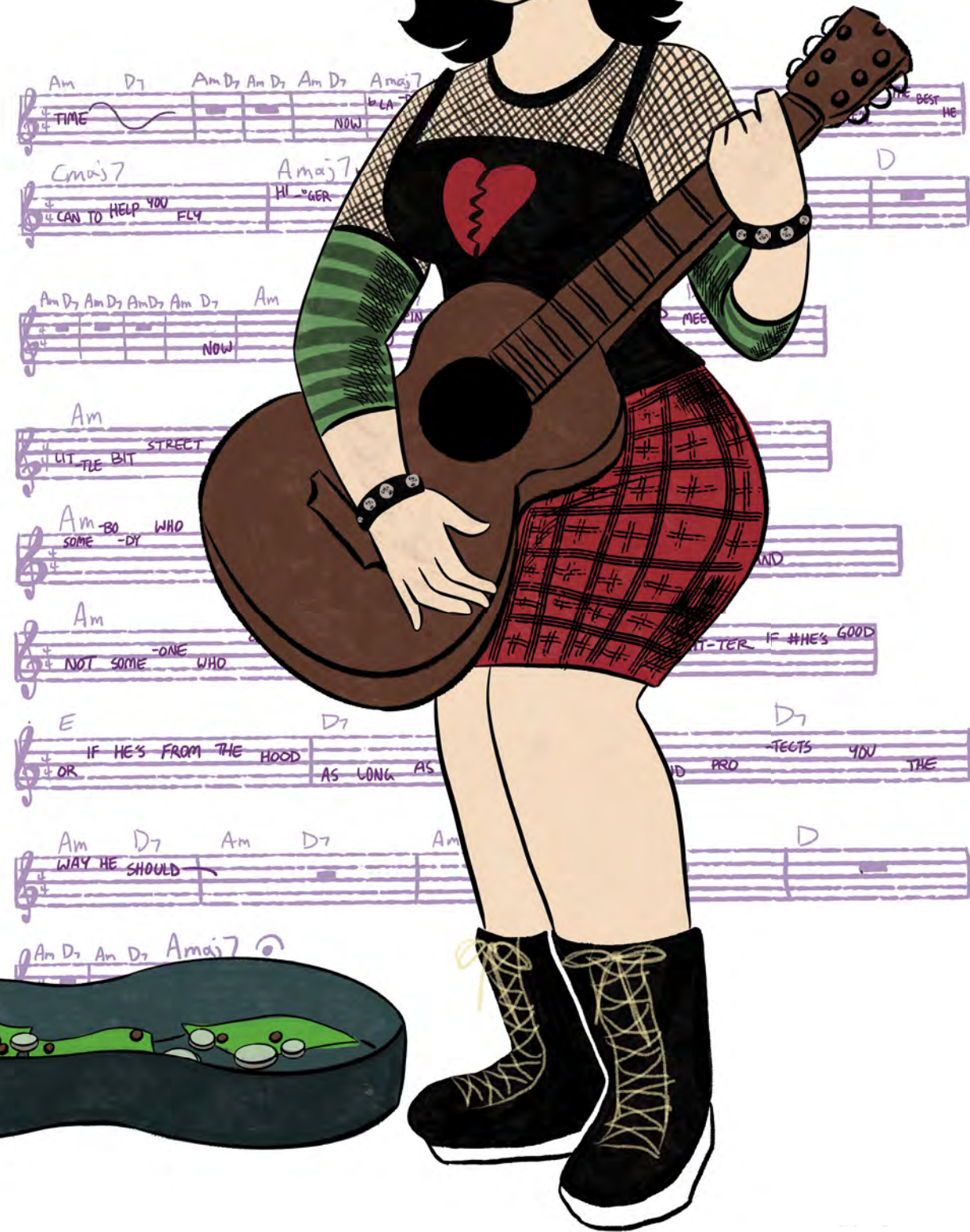
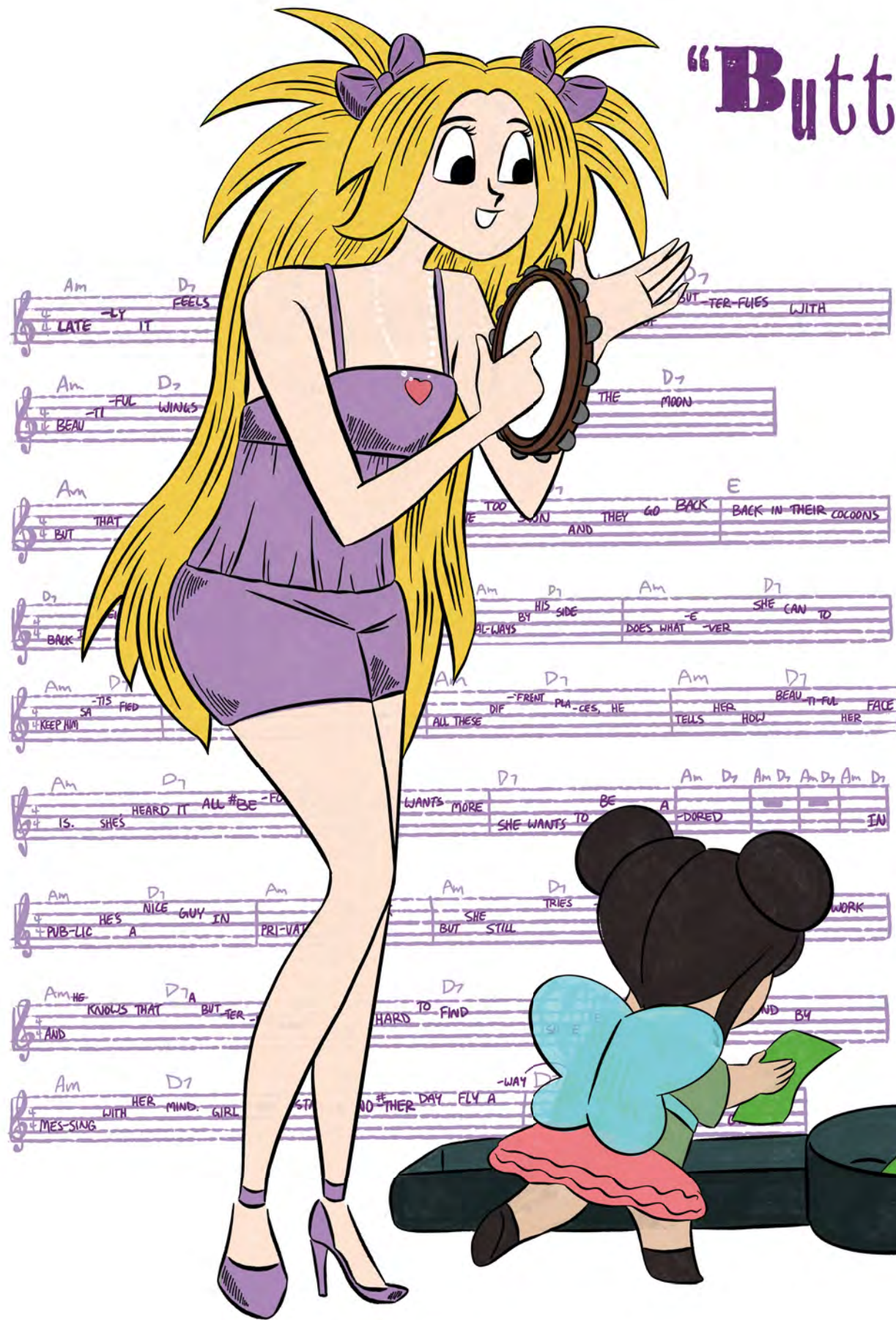


THE FUNNY THING  
IS THAT NOW  
I'M EIGHTEEN  
YEARS OLD!

SO  
MAYBE  
THERE'S  
HOPE?



# "Butterflies"





COLORADO BLVD

Born  
Too  
Late

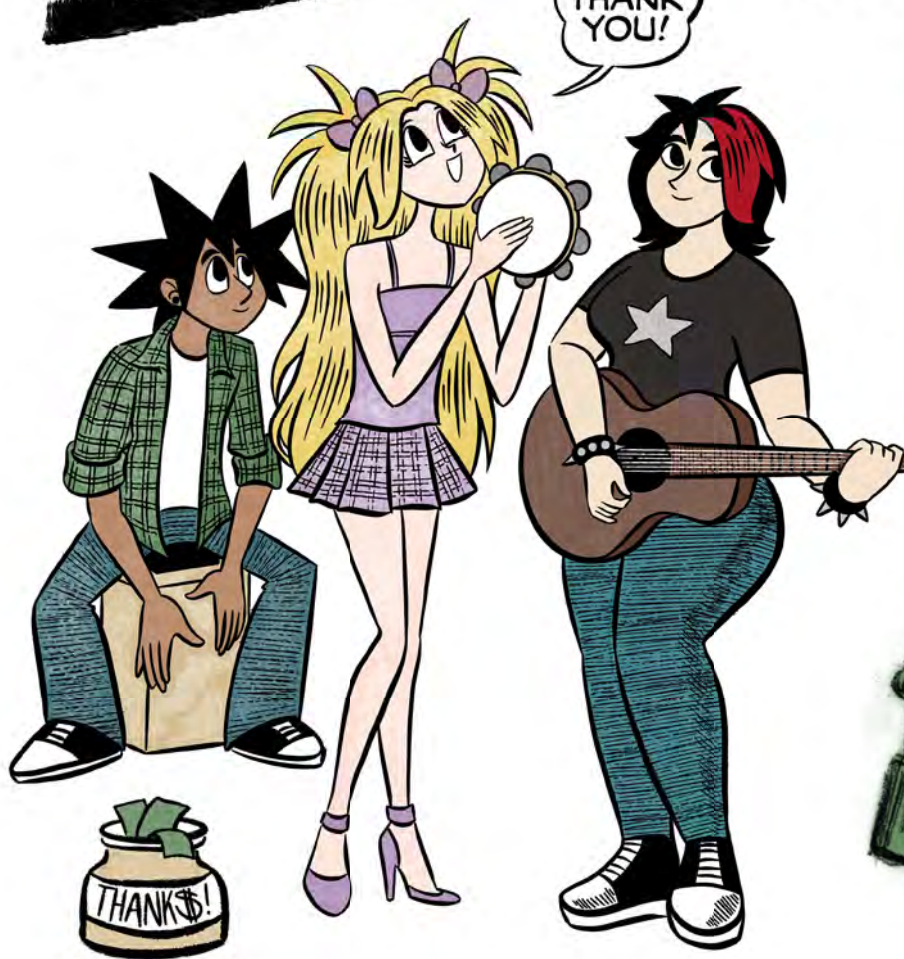


YOU SOUND TERRIFIC!

7 to 11 PM

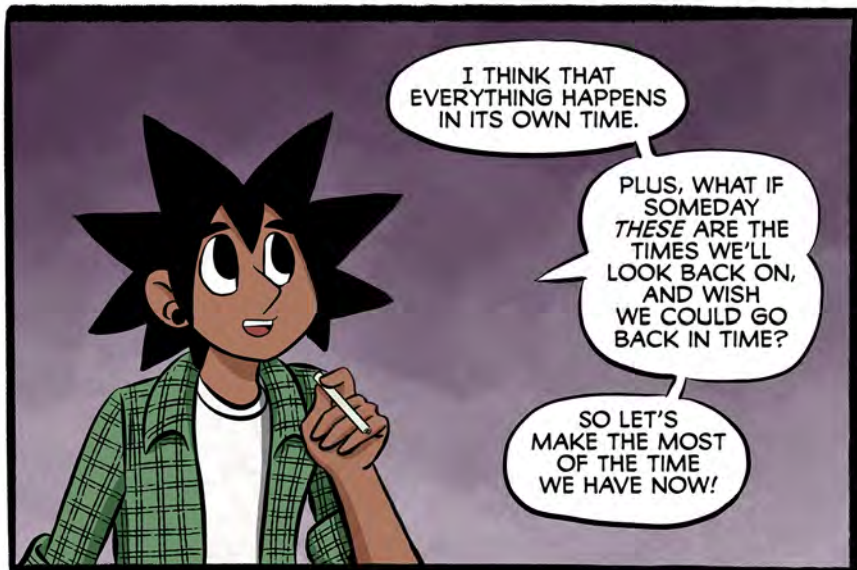
THANK YOU!

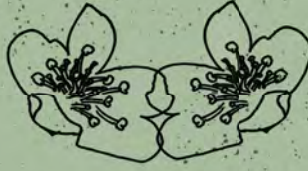
THE  
MUSIC  
MUSEUM



HI, I'M CHIP.  
AND HONESTLY,  
I DON'T THINK  
I WAS BORN  
TOO LATE.







# "I've Got No Reason"

Chords:



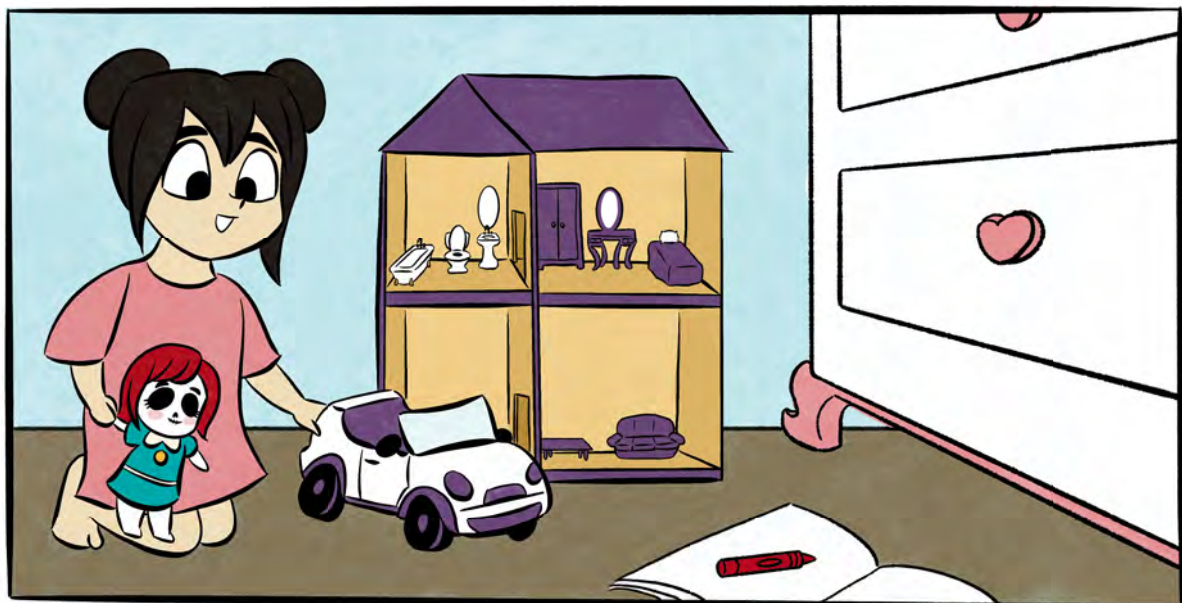
All guitars  
tune down  
1/2 step:



- ⑥ = E $\flat$     ③ = G $\flat$
- ⑤ = A $\flat$     ② = B $\flat$
- ④ = D $\flat$     ① = E $\flat$







G C G C

I'VE GOT NO REASON TO GO OUT TONIGHT

G C D

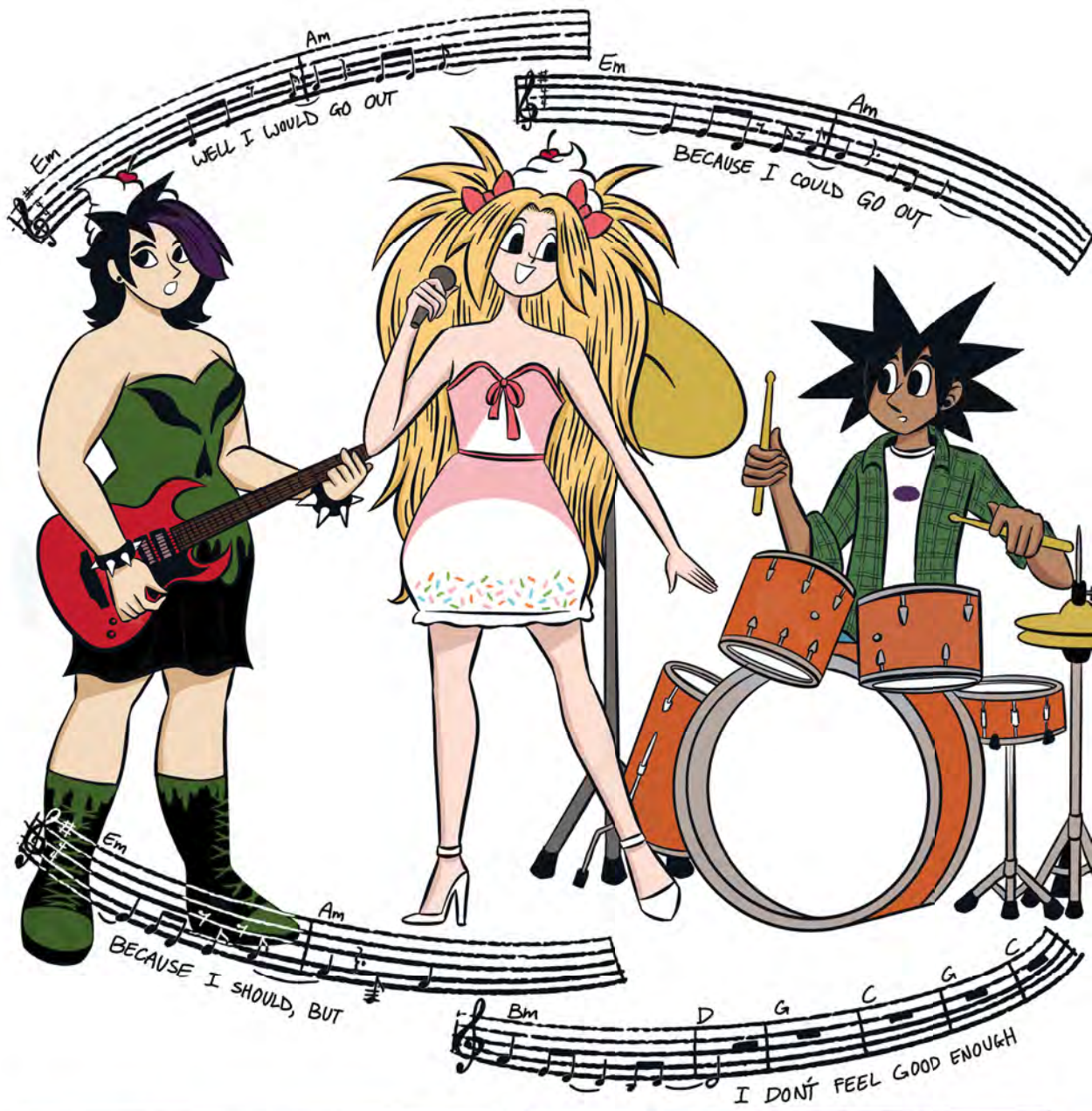
BUT THAT DON'T MEAN I WANNA STAY HOME

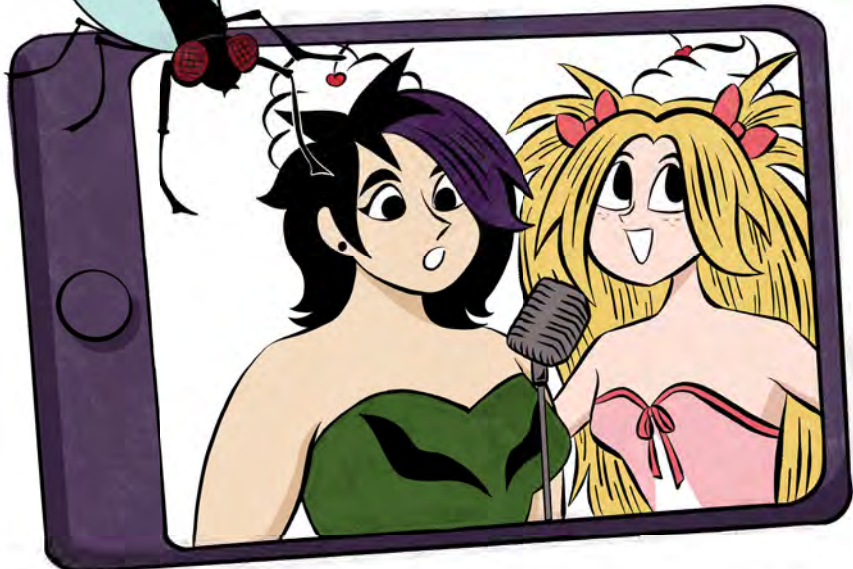
G C G C

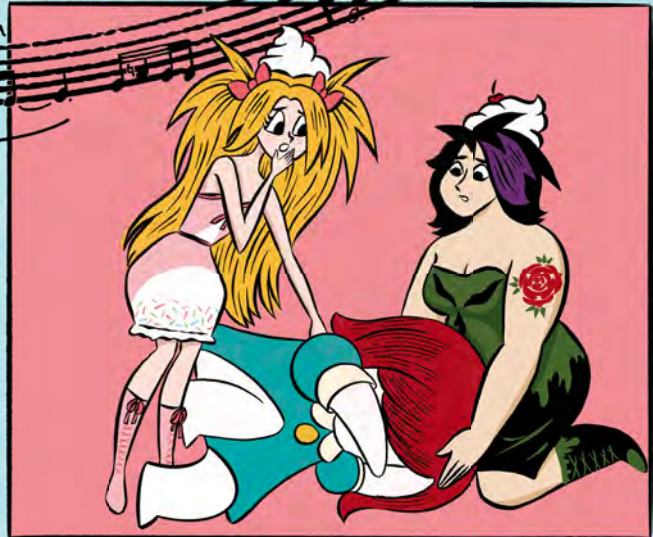
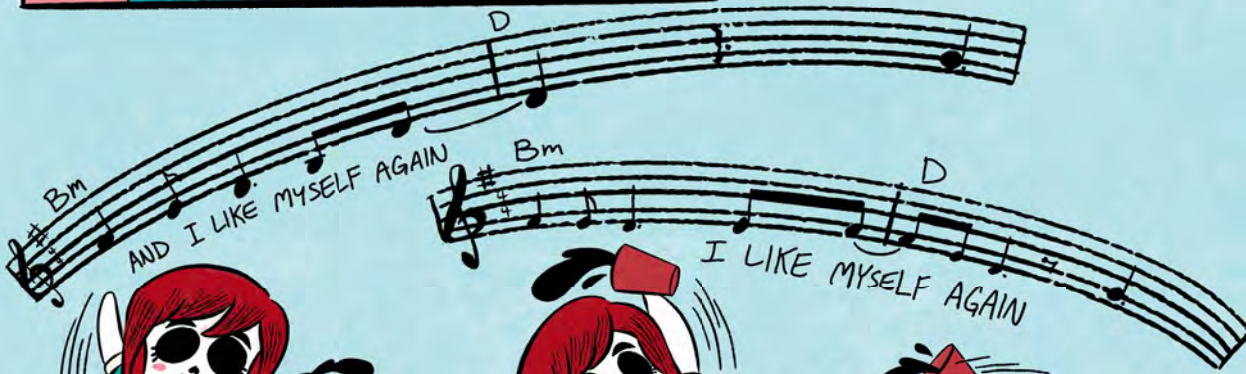
I'VE GOT NO REASON TO GO OUT TONIGHT

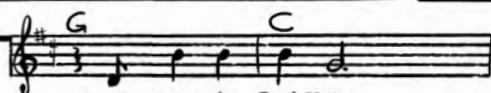
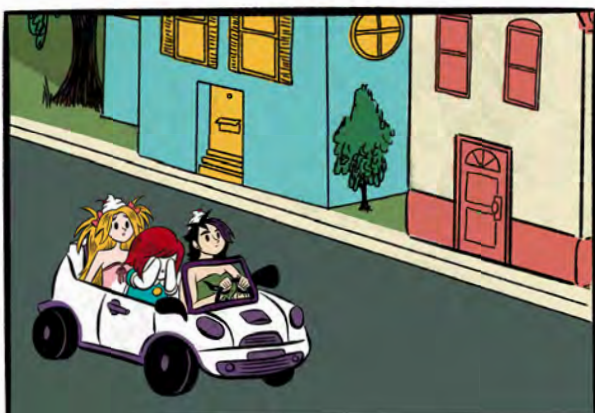
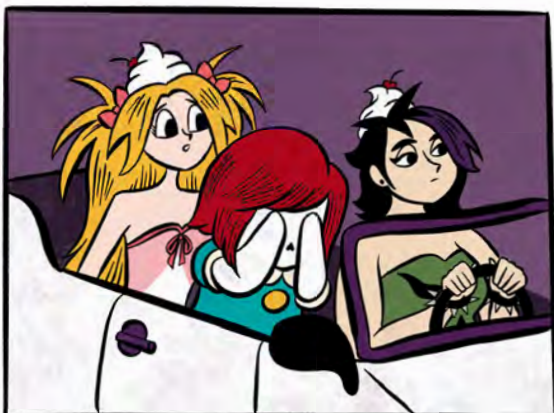
G C D

I'M SICK OF FEELING SO ALONE









I'VE GOT NO REASON



I'VE GOT NO REASON

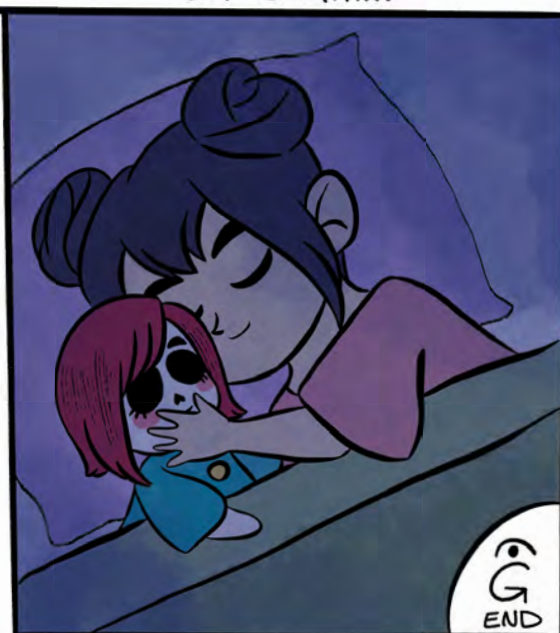
I'VE GOT NO REASON TO GO



OUT TONIGHT

OUT TONIGHT

OUT TONIGHT...

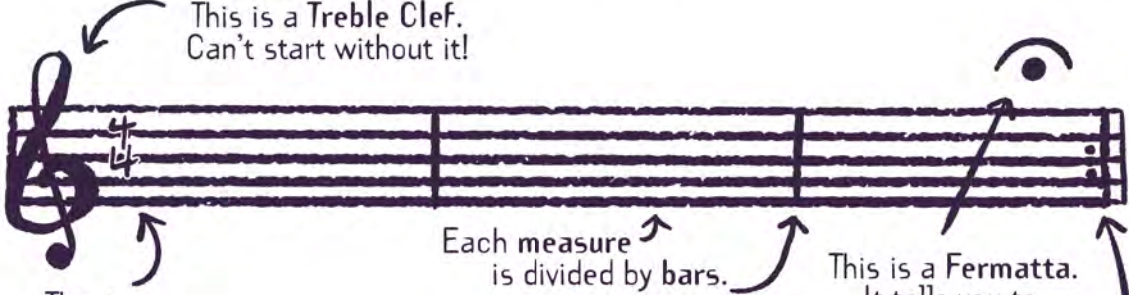


END

And now,  
some "notes"  
on music theory...



# The Grand Staff



This is a Treble Clef. Can't start without it!

This is a Time Signature. The top number shows how many beats are per measure, and the bottom number shows which note gets the beat!

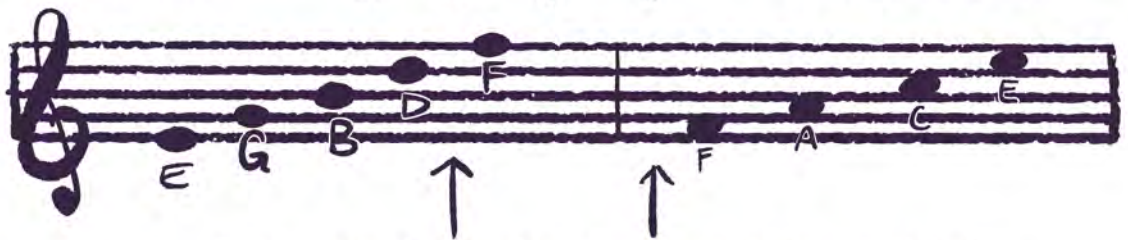
Each measure is divided by bars.

This is a Fermata. It tells you to hold the note longer than its length.

There are seven main notes:

C	D	E				
do	re	mi				
F	G	A	B			
fa	sol	la	ti			

This is a Repeat Sign. It tells you to go back to the previous measure with the same sign.



E G B D F A C

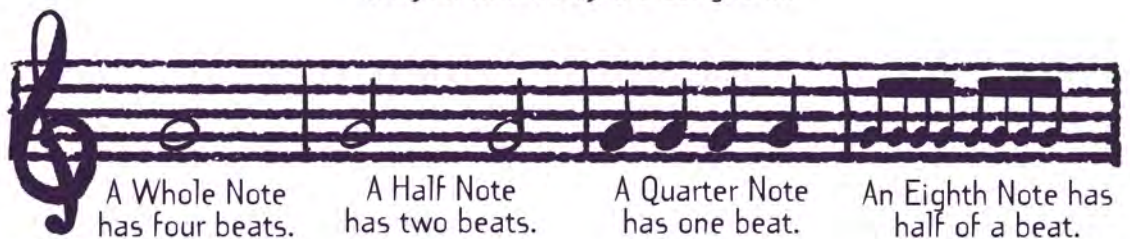
There are five lines and four spaces within the Grand Staff. Each line and space holds each different note.

A flat  $b$  symbol next to a note means that it is played a half step lower.

A sharp  $\sharp$  symbol next to a note means that it is played a half step higher.

Sharp and flat notes are called **accidentals**.

Flats and sharps placed in-between the Treble Clef and Time Signature tell you which **Key** the song is in.



A Whole Note has four beats.      A Half Note has two beats.      A Quarter Note has one beat.      An Eighth Note has half of a beat.

# BORN TOO

## LATE

is:

RONDA  
"THE REBEL"  
GUITAR & VOCALS

CHIP  
"DON'T TRIP"  
DRUMS

MELVIE  
"THE MISFIT"  
VOCALS







## **JULIA E. MARSHALL**

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MANGA, HARDCORE PUNK, AND CLASSIC  
VIDEO GAMES. YOU CAN FIND MORE OF  
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[WWW.JMARSHALLILLUSTRATION.COM](http://WWW.JMARSHALLILLUSTRATION.COM)  
OR @MERMAIDRAMEN.**



*#bandpractice*