

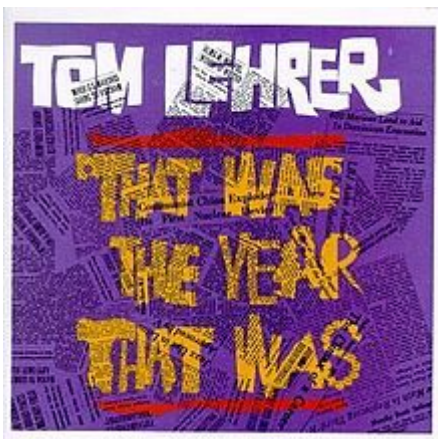
SAFER AT HOME — DAY THIRTY-TWO



May 4, 2020

There's a challenge trending on Facebook where people are asked to post the ten most influential albums they listened to growing up. I'm seeing lots of variety but none of the albums that most influenced me. See, I was never all that into collecting music or developing a musical style or taste. My vinyl influences were of a different genre but they nevertheless greatly helped to shape my personality. So without further ado...

Number 10: That Was The Year That Was — Tom Lehrer.



It was a live album recorded at the hungry i in San Francisco, containing performances by Tom Lehrer of satiric topical songs he originally wrote for the NBC television series *That Was The Week That Was*. I can still remember all the words to

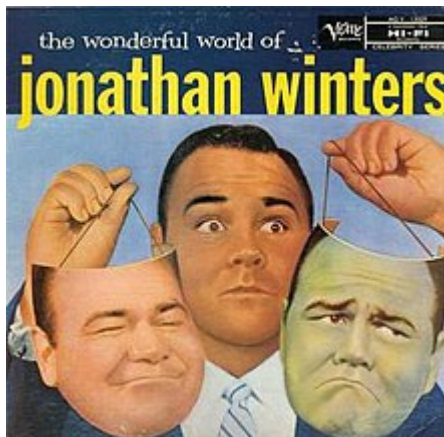
“New Math.”

Number 9: An Evening with Mike Nichols and Elaine May.



A Grammy award winning album that features selected pieces from their Broadway show of the same name. Nichols went on to become an acclaimed Hollywood director (The Graduate, Catch-22. The Birdcage). I performed one of their skits in high school.

Number 8: The Wonderful World of Jonathan Winters.



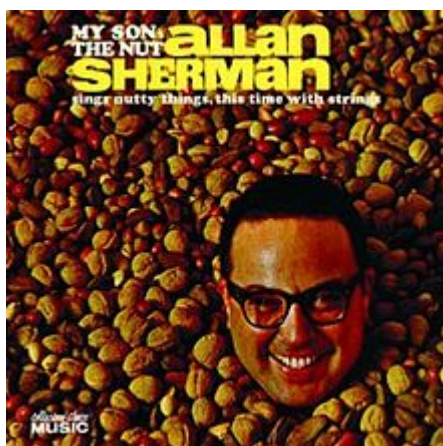
Wildly inventive, utilizing improvisational humor, Winters was the Robin Williams of his day. Williams may have been better, but Winters was first.

Number 7: The First Family.



A good-natured parody of then-President John F. Kennedy. Issued by Cadence Records, *The First Family* became the “largest and fastest selling record in the history of the record industry. This and Tom Lehrer’s album were my introduction into political humor.

Number 6: *My Son, the Nut* – Alan Sherman.



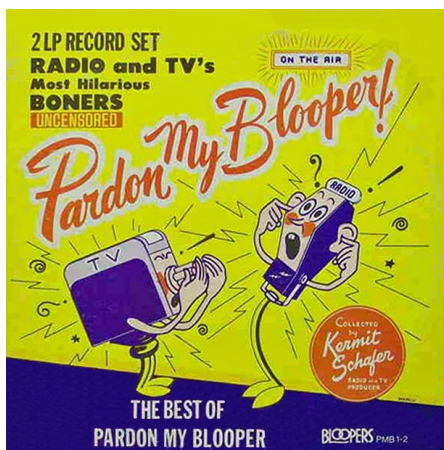
My Son, the Nut was the last comedy album to hit #1 on the *Billboard* 200 for over half a century, until “Weird Al” Yankovic’s *Mandatory Fun* in 2014. The classic “Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah: A Letter From Camp” was cut one on side two.

Number 5: *Class Clown* – George Carlin.



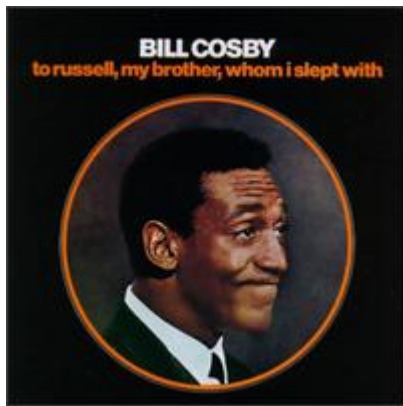
With the Seven Words You Can Never Say On Television, Carlin brilliantly demonstrated how humor can be used to deliver a powerful social message.

Number 4: Pardon my Blooper! – Kermit Shafer.



A collection of live radio and television mistakes, usually of an embarrassing nature. A guilty pleasure, it never failed to have me doubled up in laughter, no matter how many times I heard it.

Number 3: To Russell, My Brother, Whom I Slept With – Bill Cosby.



Regardless of the reprehensible choices he made in his personal life, there is no denying that as a comedic storyteller, there were few in his league. Spin Magazine once chose this 1968 recording as the greatest comedy album of all time.

Number 2: Mom Always Liked You Best – The Smothers Brothers.



The personalities, the banter, the musical talent, they were one of my favorite comedic acts. I loved their TV show as well.

Number 1: The Button Down Mind of Bob Newhart.



This recording won Album of the Year at the 1961 Grammy Awards, where Newhart was named Best New Artist; it was the first comedy album to win Album of the Year and the only time a comedian had won Best New Artist. His delivery probably did more to shape my humor than any other influence.

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