

PLEASE KILL ME
THIS IS WHAT'S COOL (HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM)



(HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/SHOP/AUTOGRAPHED-PAPERBACK-20-ANNIVERSARY-EDITION-PLEASE-KILL-ME/)

Home (HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM) > All Please Kill Me Posts (HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/CATEGORY/LATEST-PKM-CONTENT/)



Hal Willner Photo by Lou Reed

MY FAVORITE ALCHEMIST: AN HOMAGE TO HAL WILLNER

 GARY LIPPMAN (HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/AUTHOR/GARY-LIPPMAN/) ✦ SEPTEMBER 10, 2020

[ALL PLEASE KILL ME POSTS \(HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/CATEGORY/LATEST-PKM-CONTENT/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/category/latest-pkm-content/) [GARY LIPPMAN \(HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/CATEGORY/GARY-LIPPMAN/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/category/gary-lippman/)

[MUSICIANS \(HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/CATEGORY/MUSICIANS/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/category/musicians/) [R.I.P. \(HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/CATEGORY/RI/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/category/rip/) [0 COMMENTS \(HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/HAL-WILLNER-MARC-BOLAN/#RESPOND\)](https://pleasekillme.com/hal-willner-marc-bolan/#respond) ♡ 1

 294 Facebook (HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/SHARER/SHARER.PHP?U=HTTPS%3A%2F%2FPLEASEKILLME.COM%2FHAL-WILLNER-MARC-BOLAN%2F&T=M)

The release of Hal Willner's final recorded project, *Angelheaded Hipster: The Songs of Marc Bolan & T.Rex*, got Gary Lippman thinking about his friend and 'master alchemist.' Just as he'd been doing since forever, Willner reimagined Bolan's work with the assistance of hand-picked artists including Nick Cave, Joan Jett, Sean and Julian Lennon and Rolan Bolan. The results are, as always, brilliant, which only adds to the sadness of Willner's loss to COVID-19 earlier this year.

FROM '18 TO '81 AND BACK:

"You don't, by any chance, have someone performing 'Diamond Meadows,' do you? It's one of T. Rex's more obscure ballads, so I'm betting *not*, but that song once meant, like, so much to me..."

"Oh, we have it," my friend Hal Willner said, and without another word he pushed a button on a console in his Manhattan music studio. Then time dissolved on this cold November night in 2018.

A master alchemist of records and concerts ("producer" is too mundane a word for what Hal did), he was also the music supervisor since 1980 of *Saturday Night Live* as well as the close friend and aesthetic rabbi to dozens of great artists. Apart from music, though, Hal was a lovable "one-off," an American eccentric (New York City *genus*) whom Joseph Mitchell would have given his favorite fedora to write about. As a walking encyclopedia of popular art—as high and hallowed or as lowdown and ironic as such art can get—Hal was a keen collector of Crazy Kitsch Stuff. Which meant that his small studio did extra time as Hal's office, his social club, his refuge from the horrors of our current Republic, and as a wonder-cabinet just as revelatory as California's Museum of Jurassic Technology.

Crammed inside Hal's studio were bizarre board games, an Osama bin Laden mask, music boxes playing Stockhausen, a centipede statue formerly owned by Frank Zappa, Judaica-themed *tchotchkas*, an antique ice bucket overflowing with Nespresso pods, ancient flea circus brochures, a spooky Keith Richards marionette, seriously vintage vinyl (including Jimmy Durante, Alice Coltrane, Soupy Sales, and *Bill Cosby Talks To Kids About Drugs*), a Hillary Clinton-shaped pen that could shoot sparks from its mouth, a series of interactive records from the 1950s entitled *Co-Star* (Hal especially loved to mumble along in a deadpan tone with these), and a large bust of Laurel and Hardy labeled with Italian words which Hal translated as "*Between two heads, not a single coherent thought.*"

"Oh, wow," I said as the sound of John Cameron Mitchell singing, sure enough, T. Rex's "Diamond Meadows" filled the studio. Hal and I and two friends of ours fell silent to listen. This track was from Hal's then-still-unreleased opus, *Angelheaded Hipster* (<https://amzn.to/3id1XpI>), a two-CD hymn to the joys of T. Rex's music featuring Nick Cave, Joan Jett, U2 teamed up with Elton John, the brothers Lennon (Sean and Julian), Lucinda Williams, Perry Farrell, and other luminaries. Hal was giving us a preview of his album that night.

Whereas the original “Diamond Meadows” focused on Bolan’s voice, some crunchy electric guitar, and a string section, this new version was a different beast, piano-based yet equally beautiful. As the track played, Hal maintained his customary listening position: leaning way back in his chair, eyes pressed shut. I don’t know what the others there thought about the music, but its aching melancholy transported me back to a wintry night in late 1981 when I was eighteen. A few weeks earlier my mother had died, and I was shuffling now through the snow-filled empty campus of my New Jersey college, wandering directionless, lost in grief and worry and singing under my breath “Diamond Meadows.” This song felt like the only comfort available to me. Like so much music we hold dear at trying times, “Diamond Meadows” had become for me a kind of sonic talisman.

“Amazing,” I muttered thirty-seven years later as the new version of this song faded out in the Willner studio.

Hal nodded his head. He knew how good it was. And he was already punching up the next track from *Angelheaded Hipster* that he wanted to play for us: David Johansen’s swing cover of the same T. Rex groover (“Get It On (Bang A Gong)”) that Elton John and U2 have their way with. Halfway through the Johansen track, I told Hal, “When this record hits the streets, man, I’m gonna write about it.”

“Great,” said Hal, happy enough for the prospect of good PR but not overeager. More important to him was that I just shut up and listen to the music. Which is what I did. Yet now that Hal’s gone—he died on April 7 of this year at sixty-four, one of COVID-19’s first American victims—and now that *Angelheaded Hipster* has been released, I’m fulfilling the promise I made that night.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS:

Decades before I was a Hal Willner friend, I was a Hal Willner fan. Still in college in ‘85, I came upon a strange new release in my local record shop— *Lost In The Stars* (<https://amzn.to/2R9TqIg>), Hal’s “tribute album” to the Weimar Republic-era composer Kurt Weill. While I’d never heard of the tribute genre (as I’d learn, such albums were pretty much a Willner innovation), I had heard a bit about Weill. Wasn’t he, um, a *square*? But if he *was* a square, why were Sting, Marianne Faithfull, Lou Reed, John Zorn, and Van Dyke Parks all gathered together in the service of Weill’s songs? They weren’t performing these songs *straight*, either—not on some “Great Composers Songbook” trip, I mean—but treating these tunes in gloriously weird ways...So what was happening?

I’d been “Willnerized,” that’s what. In the weeks, and months, and years, to come, Hal’s album was never far from the turntable I shared with my roommate and dear friend Andy Virkus, another newly minted Willnerophile. “A writer is someone who makes a riddle out of an answer,” according to the Viennese aphorist Karl Kraus, and this quote seems germane to *Lost In The Stars*: out of the settled “answer” of Kurt Weill’s *oeuvre*, Hal had fashioned a kind of riddle.

Near the end of the 1980s came *Stay Awake*, the next Willner record, which was an homage to the music from vintage Disney movies. Needless to say, it was even more carnivalesque than its predecessor. Tom Waits rasping out “*Heigh ho, heigh ho, it’s off to work we go!*” Aaron Neville crooning the “Mickey Mouse March”? Los Lobos rocking through a *Jungle Book* ditty while Garth Hudson sets his organ swirls loose on *Mary Poppins*? The only word for this stuff was “Wow.” And with other Hal pals like NRBQ, Harry Nilsson, the Replacements, Yma Sumac, Ringo Starr, the spoken-word whiz Ken Nordine, and the supposedly Saturn-born Sun Ra along for the ride, *Stay Awake* sounded like a warped Disneyland all its own, where the pixie dust had psychotropic properties.

What really made this carnival go was Hal’s role as a collagist, an ace juxtaposer—“mixing artists from different worlds,” as he phrased it. *So how about* (he must have thought) *Michael Stipe and Natalie Merchant singing ‘Little April Shower,’ backed up by—yeah Mark Bingham! And why not mix in, uh, the Roches, to boot?* This wasn’t just about collage for collage’s sake, I’d learn—Hal enjoyed gently inviting artists out of their comfort zones. “If a singer has worked with the same guitarist throughout his or her career,” says Rachel Fox, Hal’s manager, “then bring in a different guitarist. Or if someone’s used to a three- or four-piece rock band, put a string section on it instead.”

The singer-songwriter Gavin Friday nailed it when he said, “Hal was like a movie director who makes records.” Given the whimsical unpredictability of those records, one could justly call them “*anti-tributes*,” the way that Laurence Sterne’s daring *Tristram Shandy* embodied the first English *anti-novel* only shortly after the dawn of the English novel itself. So Hal was blowing up the conventions of the

tribute album even as he was whipping it into existence.

Hal was like a movie director who makes records.

But let's be careful with that "T" word. As Rachel Fox points out, Hal preferred the term "concept" to "tribute": "He was never interested in versions that sounded like the originals, and tribute albums often do that...Hal sought out artists who would, with the help of our arrangers and musicians, make the songs their own."

Although Mr. W. was always serious about pop-culture history, working with fine established talents like Bob Neuwirth, David Amram, Carla Bley, Dr. John, Jimmy Scott, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Gary Lucas, Sharon Freeman, and Robert Wilson, he was never shy about "the new," spotting and elevating not-yet-appreciated artists such as Jeff Buckley, Mary Margaret O'Hara, Petra Haden, Rufus Wainwright, Martha Wainwright, Anohni, and Joan Wasser. Also—as with the filmmaker Robert Altman, for whose late movies Hal crafted soundtracks—Hal's work featured a regular cast of characters. This cast included those musicians and arrangers Fox mentioned, among them Marc Ribot, J.G. Thirlwell, Ralph Carney, Steven Bernstein, Bill Frisell, Steven Weisberg, and Adam Dorn, who is the son of Hal's first great mentor, the music producer Joel Dorn. Likewise essential to Willner World were Hal's wife Sheila Rogers, the afore-mentioned Ms. Fox, SNL colleagues like Keith Raywood and Maryellen Matthews, and longtime collaborating friends such as Lou Reed and Laurie Anderson, Jenni Muldaur, Pamela Esterson, David Brendel, Larry "Ratso" Sloman, and Sharyn Felder, who is the daughter of another Hal mentor, the titanic songwriter Doc Pomus.



Marc Bolan Photo by Gloria Stavers

As the 1980s proceeded, more varied items turned up in the Willner trickbag. The records he made with Marianne Faithfull were lively and compelling, as were his musical settings for spoken-word albums by William Burroughs, Terry Southern, Hunter S. Thompson, Gregory Corso, and Allen Ginsberg, whose phrase from his poem *Howl*, "angelheaded hipsters," has given Hal's T. Rex project its title. The one Willner solo album, a jamboree of sampled old-timey tunes and sound effects entitled *Whoops, I'm An Indian* (<https://amzn.to/3bNVXS6>), has put every head that's heard it through major changes. (With his own album *Go*, Moby seems to have gone shopping in the Willner idea market and hurried with a bunch of them to the nearest bank.)

Then there were the concerts that Hal began to conceive and curate. These epic four-hour shows, sounding and looking as though his concept albums had been brought to Sensurround-and-Technicolor life, testified to the glories of Bill Withers, the Firesign Theater, Leonard Cohen, Shel Silverstein, Tim Buckley, and, ahem, the Marquis de Sade. More than mere concerts, “they were theatrical pieces,” says Rachel Fox, “carefully designed by Hal to have a cast, a first act, and a second act.”

In case you couldn’t catch these shows, Mr. W. was soon bringing them to your living room with his Lorne Michaels-produced TV program. Over two seasons, *Night Music* gave us the saxophonist host David Sanborn jamming with Pere Ubu, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, The Platters, Taj Mahal, David Lindley, and a supremely quirky supergroup that only Hal could have dreamt up, much less made happen: Conway Twitty backed by the Kronos Quartet *plus* the Residents.

Hal preferred the term “concept” to “tribute”: He was never interested in versions that sounded like the originals.

Onward into the 1990s. Whenever a new disc by Hal appeared, I laid down my greenback dollars. There were salutes to Edgar Allan Poe, Harold Arlen, Charles Mingus (played on the bonkers invented instruments of Harry Partch), and the sea shanties and pirate ballads of *Rogue’s Gallery*—two volumes’ worth, and maybe Hal’s single best achievement. Then, with *The Harry Smith Project* in Brooklyn in ‘99, I finally attended my first of Hal’s concerts. Even though I caught a glimpse of the *maestro* at the show’s end, I didn’t get to speak with him. Fair enough—I was content to remain a fan. But eventually, in early 2010, Hal and I got to meet, joining two mutual comrades at a Broadway play and then a “Jewish-Italian” restaurant, after which my admiration-from-afar became a friendship.

TEN YEARS:

That first night we broke bread, Hal dropped some hints about formative experiences: his solitary years in Philadelphia as a kid grooving to music, “drawing cartoons,” and “talking to myself”; his Holocaust-survivor father who owned a delicatessen where teenaged Hal worked; and his eventful arrival in New York City for college: “The first place I went to was Hubert’s Museum and Flea Circus on 42nd Street,” Hal told John Leland in a 2017 *New York Times* profile. “I went outside and there were these two drunken women fighting with bottles. And there was a crowd, and two cops just watching. I was just, ‘Yes!’”

That profile from 2017, combined with the *Times* obit for Hal (also penned by Leland), are where to go first for details about all things Willner. In Leland’s pieces, you can read about Hal’s apprenticeship with Joel Dorn, his decades at SNL, and his early concept albums. A Nino Rota project led to a funny day Hal spent in Rome with Federico Fellini, a story he also recounted to me on the night we met. For all of Hal’s worldliness and stellar social life, I thought I could hear a trace of the excited fan-boy in his voice, an undertone saying, “Can you believe that? I’m this Jewish kid from Philly making my first record and *I get to hang out with Fellin!*”

During the ten years I knew Hal, we usually socialized at dinners and the parties of shared friends, at the SNL offices, where I often visited, and at musical events, only some of which were Hal’s own. As everyone who knew the man will attest, he would greet you with a hug and then an immediate “Check *this* out,” with the “*this*” being his latest enthusiasm: a demo he’d recently produced, or one of the silly puppet videos he made constantly, or a prankish Jerry Lewis recording he’d just unearthed, or a crackpot music find (“Walk On The Wild Side” sung partly in Yiddish, anyone?), or a phone app you won’t find it in the Apple store, one which let you replicate, viscerally, the experience of snorting cocaine lines off your cellphone screen. Because Hal’s sense of the absurd was so infectious, you couldn’t help but feel just as delighted by his treats as he did.

When I mentioned to Hal I owned some ventriloquist dolls from my childhood—Charlie McCarthy, Mortimer Sneed, and a young woman with a bright-red bob—these “dummies” became a discussion point for us. Then, at a 2018 concert honoring Hal at Roulette in Brooklyn, Laurie Anderson brought onstage with her one of Hal’s own dummies, and while watching I hatched the idea of “introducing” my dummies to Hal’s for his next self-made puppet video, but I never mentioned this idea to him, and now that it’s too late, of course, I wish I had.

A more serious subject we discussed was fatherhood. Hal would speak proudly of his son, Arlo, and asked me questions about how I'd helped to raise my now-adult son Gabriel, who was with me one summer night when I bumped into Hal on the Upper West Side. That night the three of us stood on a corner for more than an hour kibitzing and laughing. Our subjects included Hal's recent travels, his upcoming concert (a recreation of Bob Dylan's 1963 show at Town Hall with guests ranging from the poet Anne Waldman to Triumph the Insult Comic Dog), and Hal's amusingly ill-fated encounters with a certain Major Rock Star who could never seem to grasp Hal's humor. (When this rocker told Hal that he'd taken his kids to the Universal Movie Studio theme park, Hal poker-facedly asked him if they went on "the Schindler's List ride," a joke which earned him a blank stare from the rocker. It was the same blank stare the rocker gave Hal another time, years later, when Hal pretended to mix up Tom Jones with Elvis Presley.)

Not everyone "got" Mr. W., but if you did "get" him, you felt like you belonged to a kooky lovely club, and Hal was happy to have you there. "True blue" is how "Ratso" Sloman has aptly described Hal, and I got a taste of this myself at the Strand Bookstore last September. Even though I was far from being one of Hal's closest pals, he got a seat early at the Strand when I spoke there to promote my just-published first novel. And when I thanked him a few days later for making the scene, he looked at me as though I'd lost my marbles.

"Of *course* I made it," Hal said. "Why wouldn't I? How could I miss it?"

Mostly what we spoke about together was music. Which artists he should invite to perform at his next show or album, for instance. And how important it is to begin any music project with three killer numbers in succession—after which, Hal elaborated, "the listeners will follow you anywhere." We also compared humorous notes on SNL's musical guests. (When Leon Russell was on air to perform with Elton John, I said to Hal, "Cool to see Leon, right?" and he shot back, "How do we know it was *him*, though? That could have been anybody wearing shades and a long white wig! Can you *prove to me* that it was Leon Russell?") Finally, we would speak at length about how much Hal missed his cherished soul brother Lou Reed. At more than one tribute to Reed organized by Hal, the *maestro* seemed particularly proud that he ended the shows not with any of Lou's "big hits" but rather with Lou and the Velvet Underground's noisy decadent rocker "Sister Ray."



Photo by Richard Strange

Over the years I tried to get Hal hip to a few musical artists not yet on his radar, introducing him at one point to Eugene Hutz, the Ukrainian-American performer at the core of the fantastic band Gogol Bordello. Hal told me he wanted Hutz to sing a song on a possible next Willner concept album, which would be devoted to the music of George Harrison. Having been into the spiritual jazz genre since his

youth, Hal hoped to unleash his hybridizing ways on Harrison's Eastern-flavored devotional music.

First, however, was *Angelheaded Hipster*. As Hal would write in this record's liner notes, he had a friend in high school, a "twisted guru," who'd introduced him to the acoustic sounds of Tyrannosaurus Rex, which was Marc Bolan's first major group. Wrote Hal, "I found these records to be very beautiful, soothing, and creepy, with an ethereal sound...(and) surreal lyrics like one I remember by heart: '*dragon's ear and druid's spear / protects you while the Dworn's are here.*' I couldn't figure out what a Dworn was..."

At more than one tribute to Reed organized by Hal, the maestro seemed particularly proud that he ended the shows not with any of Lou's "big hits" but rather with Lou and the Velvet Underground's noisy decadent rocker "Sister Ray."

When Bolan made the jump to his next band, the boisterous T. Rex, Hal jumped with him, and now calls 1971's *Electric Warrior* "a perfect record...These songs rocked in a way that I hadn't quite heard before, with incredible grooves suggesting a lot of genres...Pretty soon it became my all-time 'get happy record.' I actually danced to it, and I don't really dance."

When the record company BMG came calling for Hal to make an album honoring Marc Bolan, Hal said yes. "Bolan," he'd noticed, "was hardly ever talked about as a 'composer.' It was all about what a great rocker he was, how innovative he was, how David Bowie took his essence...But I put him in the same pantheon as other composers that I've explored before...So the concept for the album became to show Bolan as a composer."

Which Hal achieves with aplomb on *Angelheaded Hipster*. Yes, I'm partial to "Diamond Meadows"—and John Cameron Mitchell's version of that song which had helped me to mourn my mother decades earlier—but the album boasts marvels from start to finish. Hal is up to his usual alchemical tricks here, pairing Todd Rundgren with Donald Fagen as well as Kesha with guitarist Wayne Kramer of the MC5 (not to mention Richard Barone and Jenni Muldaur on background vocals, Mocean Worker on electronics, and a rip-snorting horn section). By the way, Kesha's cut, "Children Of The Revolution," wins my vote for 2020 theme song, channeling as it does all of this year's righteous turmoil.

Hal jumped with him, and now calls 1971's Electric Warrior "a perfect record...These songs rocked in a way that I hadn't quite heard before, with incredible grooves suggesting a lot of genres...Pretty soon it became my all-time 'get happy record.'

Angelheaded Hipster is a very female-centric record, but this is no surprise, since Hal was always keen to shine his spotlight on brilliant women. Hence Peaches turns "Solid Gold, Easy Action" into, well, Peaches (but with Renaud-Gabriel Pion's bass clarinet). Gaby Moreno sings the shit out of "Beltane Walk," Beth Orton does the same on "Hippy Gumbo," and Emily Haines of Metric is right there with them on "Ballrooms of Mars." Helga Davis, Nena, Victoria Williams, and Jennifer Charles of Elysium Fields are likewise sensational.



Photo by Richard Strange

To paraphrase Hal, you can dance to this album, even if you don't really dance. But the last voice you hear on the last track is an intentionally poignant one. It belongs to Rolan Bolan, Marc's only child, now a talented singer himself. Because Hal had previously worked with Jeff Buckley and Eric Mingus, Charles' son, it isn't surprising that Rolan got the call. For Hal to conclude his T. Rex homage with Marc Bolan's progeny makes for a perfect Willnerian grace note: honoring heritage while blasting futureward.

Around this year's April Fool's Day, a few weeks into our national "lockdown," I sent Hal the link to a video documentary about Vivian Stanshall. I'd never rapped with Hal about Stanshall or his work fronting the gobsmackingly good Sixties-era Bonzo Dog Band, but I figured it was right up Mr. W.'s alley, and his text back to me was "*Oh, man.*" I made a mental note to bring up Stanshall the next time we spoke. Before that next time happened, I got word that Hal had died.

The concept for the album became to show Bolan as a composer.

My first impulse was to rage at how damned *unnecessary* Hal's death was—with even slightly more sensitive or effective or just plain *sane* leadership at the top, so many American COVID victims would still be among us. Quickly, though, my rage seemed beside the point. So did everything else except for Hal and the grieving process. And what a weird yet meaningful grieving process that turned out to be, with weekly Zoom *shivahs* necessarily replacing face-to-face celebrations of the man. As I listened to Hal's friends and colleagues speak about him—and as I absorbed heartfelt online paeans to Hal by Nick Cave, Diamanda Galas, Elvis Costello, and Tom Waits—I found out so much about the man that I hadn't known before, stuff I wish I could ask him about. Sweet songs composed for Hal by Kate St. John and Broken Social Scene's Kevin Drew hit hard. And once I heard the welcome news that *Angelheaded Hipster* (<https://amzn.to/3id1XpI>) finally had a release date, I felt like the young Hal himself on his first day in Fun City when he got to witness some of its seventies-vintage madness: "Yes!"

FURTHER ROTATIONS (AROUND THE SUN):

The story goes that when a group of friends were leaving the Hollywood funeral of the great film director Ernst Lubitsch, one of these friends said mournfully, "No more Lubisch" and another replied, "And no more Lubisch *pictures.*" Because I never stopped being a fan of Hal's work even after becoming his friend, I haven't forgotten, in the midst of mourning the man, to mourn as well all the beautiful sounds Hal won't be able to give us. And with his T. Rex album being such a *tour de force*, it's easy to imagine him knocking everyone's socks off with that possible George Harrison project, and then...no limits. The stars could have been his destination, with Saturn, his beloved Sun Ra's birthplace, as the first stop. (Maybe Saturn is where those "Dworns" come from.)

"Are you ever going to release your *Night Music* TV shows on DVD?" I asked Hal once.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Too complicated, getting all the rights. Why bother, anyway? Most of them are on YouTube."



Photo by Richard Strange

Which didn't sound right to me. Shouldn't *Night Music* be preserved on a more durable and noble format than YouTube? Now, however, I think about this differently. Now, YouTube seems perfect, because it's right there for everyone to access and to dig, just as the rest of Hal's work fortunately pulses on in recorded form. *Vita brevis*, yes, but at least *ars longa*. So for those of us who "got" Hal—and for those who haven't "gotten" him yet, but should, and perhaps will—his legacy and spirit remain to be engaged with, savored, and learned from. Tom Robbins reminds us that "It's never too late to have a happy childhood," or at least to feel some defiant hope and laughter in spite of the darkness, and it's never too late to get "Willnerized," either, or to renew your "Willnerization." (Maybe start by singing along to "Sister Ray" in a Jimmy Durante voice.) As Hal concluded his liner notes for *Angelheaded Hipster*, writing two months before his death, "I'll be seeing you."

Which brings us once more to the man's final work. I just cued up a track from it on my computer. It's "Diamond Meadows," the gorgeous version Hal cut with John Cameron Mitchell. The last time I heard this T. Rex ballad which once meant so much to me, I was hanging out with Hal in his studio. That studio is empty now. Yet this music I'm listening to is just like the zany visionary *mensch* who alchemized it: unforgettable.

###

Order *Angelheaded Hipster* from B&N (<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/angelheaded-hipster-the-songs-of-marc-bolan-t-rex/34946885>)

Order *Angelheaded Hipster* from Amazon (<https://amzn.to/3id1XpI>)

Thanks to Rachel Fox and Vera Szombathelyi for their kind assistance. Dedicated to all of Willner World—and to Maryellen Cataneo (1954-2019), who loved music, who lived it, and who was there.



MORE FROM PKM:

[HAL WILLNER, AMERICAN VISIONARY \(https://pleasekillme.com/hal-willner/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/hal-willner/)

[FROM ROLLING THUNDER TO STUBBORN HEART: LARRY “RATSO” SLOMAN TELLS ALL \(https://pleasekillme.com/larry-ratso-slovan/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/larry-ratso-slovan/)

[MARC BOLAN: A DANDY IN THE UNDERWORLD \(https://pleasekillme.com/marc-bolan-dandy-underworld/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/marc-bolan-dandy-underworld/)

[MARC BOLAN DOCUMENTARY, ‘RIDE ON!’ \(https://pleasekillme.com/marc-bolan-documentary-ride-on/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/marc-bolan-documentary-ride-on/)

[f 294 Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fpleasekillme.com%2Fhal-willner-marc-bolan%2F&t=M\)](https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fpleasekillme.com%2Fhal-willner-marc-bolan%2F&t=M)

[MARC BOLAN \(HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/TAG/MARC-BOLAN/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/tag/marc-bolan/)

[T REX \(HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/TAG/T-REX/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/tag/t-rex/)

Find us on [f \(https://www.facebook.com/pleasekillmebook/\)](https://www.facebook.com/pleasekillmebook/)

Subscribe To Our Weekly Newsletter!

email address

Subscribe

WEAR A MASK

[PREVIOUS ARTICLE \(HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/SHOPPING-WITH-PURPOSE/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/shopping-with-purpose/)

[SHOPPING WITH A PURPOSE: PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR HEART IS \(HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/SHOPPING-WITH-PURPOSE/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/shopping-with-purpose/)

NO NEWER ARTICLES

[GARY LIPPMAN \(HTTPS://PLEASEKILLME.COM/AUTHOR/GARY-LIPPMAN/\)](https://pleasekillme.com/author/gary-lippman/)

Born and raised in New Jersey, Gary Lippman received a law degree from Northwestern University, and has worked with New York's Innocence Project. Lippman's play Paradox Lust ran off-Broadway in 2001, and his writing has been published in The New York Times, The Paris Review, VICE, Fodors Travel Guides, Open City, 8x8, and other worthy places. In 2019, Lippman published his first novel, Set the Controls for the Heart of Sharon Tate.