

TRACK LISTING: Off the 60: A Mix-Tape Dedication to Los Angeles
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1. **“This Town” by The Go-Go’s (*Beauty and the Beat*, I.R.S. Records, 1981):** The Go-Go’s were formed in Hollywood in 1978 by members of the early L.A. punk scene and this song reflects their lives in that moment. The Go-Go’s initially consisted of Belinda Carlisle (vocals), Jane Wiedlin (guitar, vocals), Margot Olavarria (bass), and Elissa Bello (drums). Members Charlotte Caffey (guitar), Gina Schock (drums) and Kathy Valentine (bass) were added by 1981 after founding members Margot Olavarria (bass) and Elisa Bello (drums) were fired. The Go-Go’s were the first female band writing and playing their own music to reach number one on the *Billboard* Charts. This was the first record I purchased with my own money.
2. **“Del-Tone Rock” by Dick Dale and his Del-Tones (*The B-Side of “Let’s Go Trippin’,” Deltone Records, 1961*):** Dick Dale was born in Boston, Massachusetts and came to Southern California in 1954—**Orange County**, but we’ll let that slide—where he was one of the innovators in the “Surf Music” genre that many still associate with Los Angeles. “Del-Tone Rock” was the B-Side of the alleged first surf song ever, “Let’s Go Trippin’.” An avid surfer, Dale sought to imitate with his guitar the sounds that he heard while riding waves—and he pushed his equipment to the max while doing so (Fender guitars, another Southern California staple, designed several custom guitars and amps for Dale and still sell a “Dick Dale Custom Shop Stratocaster” model. My dad once got in trouble for sneaking out to see Dick Dale play a “stomp” at the Riverside Armory in 1963. I saw him play at the Dragonfly in 1996.
3. **“La Bamba” by The Plugz (*Electrify Me*, Plugz Records, 1979):** The first rock and roll version of this Mexican folk song was of course recorded by Richie Valens of Pacoima in 1958—he was first known as “Little Richard of the Valley”—and his life and music inspired countless musicians after his untimely death at age 17 in a plane crash in rural Clearlake, Iowa. The Plugz’ punk-rock version both pays homage to Valens and signifies on the outsidership of his music career—his manager insisted he whiten his surname by changing it from Valens to Valenzuela for example. The Plugz formed in 1977 in **East Los Angeles** and their version of “La Bamba” was recorded with the original line-up: Tito Larriva (lead vocals/guitar), Charlie Quintana (drums), and Barry McBride (bass/backing vocals). The Plugz were staples in the early LA punk rock scene, but they challenged its Hollywood-centricity with a sound that also had firm roots in Chicano garage rock from bands like Thee Midnights. I first heard The Plugz on the soundtrack to *Repo Man*, and I can’t tell you how many batteries I went through fastforwarding from “El Clavo y Cruz” to “Hombre Secreto.”
4. **“Chango” by Ozomatli (*Ozomatli*, Almo Sounds, 1998):** Ozomatli was formed in **Los Angeles** in 1995, after meeting through their affiliation with the Peace and Justice Center. A multiethnic, multiracial collective that, at the time “Chango” was recorded was comprised of Wil-Dog Abers (bass, vocals), Ulises Bella

(clarinet, guitar, tenor saxophone, vocals), Chali 2na (MC), Cut Chemist (DJ), Raúl Pacheco (guitar, vocals), Justin Porée (percussion), Asdrú Sierra (trumpet, vocals) and Jiro Yamaguchi (tabla, cajón, other percussion, vocals), Ozomatli is unabashedly and proudly political through and through: in their lyrics, in their brilliantly miscegenated music—described by Bella and Yamaguchi as “that crazy blend that's going on between that cacophony of sound” on the streets of L.A. (NPR, 2007)—and in the shows they choose to perform. Ozomatli famously played their cumbia-funk-hip hop-salsa-merengue jams in front of the 2000 Democratic Convention in Downtown Los Angeles and continued to record after the LAPD shut them down and began to shoot rubber bullets, tear gas, and pepper spray paint balls at the peacefully gathered crowd (the footage opens their second record *Embrace the Chaos*). I included this particular song to also give props to the way in which Ozo has politicized collective dancing—and dances their politics—I have seen them play in many diverse venues from the Cal Plaza to their first time out on the punky wunky Warped Tour and I have never seen them fail to move the crowd in more ways than one. Brava, Ozo!

5. **“Unyielding Conditioning” by Fishbone (*Give A Monkey A Brain and He'll Swear He's the Center of the Universe*, 1993):** One of the best (and most virtuosically versatile) bands from Southern California, hands down, Fishbone was formed by high school buddies John Norwood Fisher (bass, vocals), Kendall Jones (guitar), Phillip "Fish" Fisher (drums), Angelo Moore (vocals, saxophone, and theremin); "Dirty" Walter A. Kibby II (vocals, trumpet); and Christopher Dowd (keyboards, trombone, vocals) in **South Central Los Angeles** in 1979 in a very L.A. story—everyone but San Fernando Valley local Moore was being bussed in to the overwhelmingly white school from Compton, an 100 mile round trip that you can hear in their music. If you have never heard of this wonderful fusion band—everything from heavy metal to ska to funk to soul to punk—but this song sounds teasingly familiar, consider even just the LA bands that have stood on these giant's shoulders: the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Jane's Addiction, No Doubt, the Skeletones, the Voodoo Glow Skulls, Hepcat. While it has always burned me up that Fishbone has never seen the level of fame that many of these acts have—too bad you can't pay the rent with respect—I refuse to talk about them as a failure, especially not as an act who has unceasingly worked so hard to portray Los Angeles they live in story and sound. In a recent interview with the Japanese *Metropolis*, Norwood Fisher stated: “you know we came from gang-related neighborhoods, so for me the violence of punk made sense. There was a big cross-cultural surge, everybody was listening to everything—mod and ska and new wave—everybody could enjoy it, and for a moment it didn't matter what color you were.” To create that “one moment,” Fishbone has never stopped telling the stories of the numerous moments where it does matter—the tensions embodied in “Unyielding Conditioning”—and that is why I will always love them. By the way, these veteranos are still on the road so please support Fishbone whenever they come to home to play.
6. **“Blessings” by The Visionaries and the Beat Junkiez (*Galleries, Up Above Records* 1998).** This virtuosic **Los Angeles** hip hop super group in the tradition of

multicultural, multiracial Angeleno musical collectives like WAR and Ozomatli, blends the MC talents of Visionaries 2 Mex, LMNO, Lord Zen, Dannu, Key Kool, and DJ Rhettmatic with the legendary turntablist crew the World Famous Beat Junkies (who were formed in Orange County in 1992 by J-Rocc) and whose members over the years have included Rhettmatic, Curse, Melo-D, D-Styles, Red-Jay, Havik, Tommy Gun, & What?!, Symphony, DJ Babu (also of Dilated Peoples) and Mr. Choc. The cream of the backpack crop, this group was the sound of L.A. underground positivity for myself and so many artists, writers, and musicians I knew in the 2000s. Not to mention that this amazing downtempo beat also reminds me of dancing with my best girls at turn-of-the-millennium late night chill spots all over the city—after long days grinding the books hard working toward our Ph.D.s in American Studies and Ethnicity at USC—life-affirming spots like the Little Temple, Carbon, Bounce Rock Skate, the Dub Club, the Root Down, and Nappy at the Roots.

7. **“All Day Music” by WAR (*All Day Music*, United Artists, 1972)** The title song off their first album since changing their name from “Eric Burdon and WAR,” “All Day Music” is a musical manifesto of sorts for the multiethnic 7-piece funk/soul band that came together in 1969 in **Long Beach** (although the core of the band had been together since 1962 as “The Creators.” The new line-up was comprised of Howard Scott (guitar, percussion, vocals), B.B. Dickerson (bass, percussion, vocals), Lonnie Jordan (organ, piano, percussion, vocals), Harold Brown (drums, percussion, vocals), Harold Brown (drums, percussion, vocals), Papa Dee Allen (conga, bongos, percussion, vocals), Charles Miller (flute, sax, percussion, vocals), and Lee Oskar (harmonica, percussion, vocals). The gentle strains of this song always take me right back simultaneously to the parks I have loved and loved in in Los Angeles—Echo Park, Pan Pacific Park, Lincoln Park, MacArthur Park and especially Elysian Park, where my husband and I had our first hike together and where we eventually married in 2007.
8. **“Concrete Schoolyard” by Jurassic 5 (*Jurassic 5*, TVT/Interscope, 1998)** Jurassic 5 formed like Voltron back in 1993, from the wreckage of two earlier hip hop groups, Rebels of Rhythm and Unity Committee, and was made up MCs Charles Stewart (Chali 2na), Dante Givens (Akil), Courtenay Henderson (Zaakir), Marc Stuart (Mark 7even), and disc jockeys Mark Potsic (DJ Nu-Mark) and Lucas Macfadden (Cut Chemist)—both Cut Chemist and Chali 2na were also in Ozomatli until 2000). J5 cut their teeth at L.A.’s legendary “Good Life,” a **South Central** health food store owned by B. Hall that became an influential hotbed of rhyme in the early 1990s, hosting a “no cursing” open-mic night that nurtured innovative acts like J5, Medusa, the Pharcyde, and the Freestyle Fellowship. While I didn’t make it to Leimert in time for The Good Life, I loved Thursdays at Project Blowed, the next incarnation of the hip hop workshop held at filmmaker Ben Caldwell’s community arts, multimedia, and performance space, KAOS Network, which he founded in 1990. It is still held every Thursday night at 43rd Place and Leimert Blvd., check it out sometime and show LA your shoes!

9. **“Cruisin” by Smokey Robinson (*Where There’s Smoke*, Motown/Tamla 1979)**
Smokey Robinson was already quite famous as a Motown originator by the time he scored this throwback hit at the end of the disco era. Motown had been based in Los Angeles since 1972, and this song—an instant classic in the Lowrider Oldie genre co-written by Robinson and fellow Miracle Marv Taupin—shows just how much L.A. had impacted the label, especially Latino car culture. Now a staple on Art Laboe’s “Killer Oldies,” a Los Angeles radio show famous for playing “Oldies but Goodies” by special request. I’d like to dedicate “Cruisin” to my husband Charlie Ackerman. Baby, I love you so much, and I miss those days when we used to cruise to Echo Park and ride the paddle boats. Mwah.

10. **“It was a Good Day” by Ice Cube (*The Predator*, Priority Records, 1993)** Born O’Shea Jackson in Compton, he took on his famous moniker “Ice Cube” when he joined old school rap group CIA in the mid-1980s (the group sang backing vocals on “Cabbage Patch”—remember that?) and then became a member of legendary hip hop group NWA in 1986. He went solo upon NWA’s break up in 1989 and produced club bangers for a good many years. I almost picked “Bop Gun” for this compilation—I love the George Clinton reference and the way it so perfectly captures the best vibes of the 1990s—but there is a world of LA knowledge embedded in the way in which the minor key sample from the Isley Brothers’ beautiful 197X hit “Footsteps in the Dark” subtly undercuts Ice Cube’s Southern California fantasy that it could only be this song. Not to mention the long afterlife of “Good Day”: while I usually shy away from gross generalizations, I think I am safe to say that everyone who grew up in the L.A. region in the 1990s has a special love for this song. It is the day by which many of our good days are judged. People have such enduring love for the song that someone at the blog *Murk Avenue* spent many many hours using context clues to determine once in for all that this legendary good day was in fact, January 20, 1992. While you may have missed its twentieth anniversary, it’s not too late to order up the blimp for next year.

11. **“A Million Miles Away” by The Plimsouls (*Everywhere At Once*, Geffen, 1983)**
Formed in **Paramount**, from the ashes of the power pop/punk trio The Nerves in 1978—who performed the killer original version of “Hanging On The Telephone,” covered more famously by New Yawk’s Blondie—the classic line up includes singer, guitarist and songwriter Peter Case, drummer Louie Ramirez, guitarist Eddie Munoz and bassist Dave Pahoia. Their first break came when Long Beach promoter Stephen Zepeda signed the group to his Beat Records label for a five-song EP called *Zero Hour*, whose title song received a lot of KROQ airplay. Their second crack at fame occurred when they were hired as the “club band” in the film *Valley Girl* (1983), which my little sister and I watched over and over again, thanks to ON Television and lax babysitters. As a result, this song was the soundtrack to some of my earliest

LA dreamings, and it—plus a very young Nicolas Cage as the rough guy from “over the hill” in Hollywood—gave punk rock boys permanent real estate in my heart.

12. **“I Can’t Stand it Anymore” by Union 13 (*East Los Presents. . .*, Epitaph Records, 1997)** Formed in **Boyle Heights** in 1992, and influenced by punk rock, hardcore, metal, and their shared Mexican—Central American upbringing, the original lineup on this recording consisted of **Edward Escoto** on vocals, **José Mercado** and **Ben Sandoval** on guitars, **Jerry Navarro** on bass, and **Louie Villareal** on drums. My husband, who attended high school at Mujeres y Hombres Nobles with José, helped get Union 13 signed, when he slipped their demo tape to Brett Guerwitz of Epitaph records (whom he was nannying for at the time. A nanny with a six-inch pink Mohawk! Brilliant!). I almost passed out many years later when I realized that the guy in the Uncle Sam hat pictured on the *East Los Presents. .* CD packaging that I had seen hundreds and hundreds of times—I really wore that CD out!—was in fact the man I had married. I eventually spent so much time with these guys, in vans and in clubs on both sides of the border, that even though I haven’t seen them in years, I still think of Union 13 like family—even more so after they played a show in my backyard in Riverside and they got into a friendly brawl in the front. Ah, brothers!
13. **“Jane Says” by Jane’s Addiction (*Nothing’s Shocking*, Triple XXX Records, 1988):** This band came together in **Venice** in 1985 out of the remains of Psi-Com, the first LA-area band of Queens transplant **Perry Farrell** (government name Peretz Bernstein) and included **Dave Navarro** (guitarist), **Eric Avery** (bass), and Stephen Perkins (drums). Both this song and the band were named after the struggles of Farrell’s drug addicted roommate, Jane Bainter, whom he lived with on Wilton Street in Hollywood in the early days of the band’s history. My first history with this song begins with high school subjection coupled with a lustful yearning for the sound of the bohemian unknown; I remember my best friend was almost suspended for wearing a *Nothing’s Shocking* T-Shirt to school because it featured plaster casts of naked women with their hair on fire—“but the female body is beautiful” I remember her saying, as she reluctantly turned the shirt inside out. The second is of moving to Los Angeles and living in Koreatown, on the fabled St. Andrews street mentioned in the song, and though the intensity of my feeling sfor this band had long since faded, “Jane Says” would pop into my head at least once a day as I headed out to hit the red line, find a coffee shop, walk past the Wiltern on my way to the Sav-on, or grab some Pho 2000 in the middle of the night. And I would stop, look up at the gently waving palm fronds, and remember that no matter what was going on in my life—high drama, money struggles, the mundanity of getting older—“at least I live in Los Angeles.”
14. **“Destination Unknown” by Missing Persons (*Spring Session M*, Capitol Records, 1982)** Missing Persons, a new wave staple on the radio and MTV in its infancy, were founded in 1980 in **Los Angeles** by Warren Cuccurullo (guitar), Dale Bozzio

(vocalist), Terry Bozzio (drummer) and later Patrick O'Hearn (bass) and Chuck Wild (keyboard). While this song is much lesser known than "Walking in L.A."—which I still get asked about occasionally out here on the East Coast. . ."is it true?" . . .um, once and for all, "NO!"—I think it really captures a particular alternative New Wave sonic alterity that scholar, poet, and Highland Park native Wanda Alarcon describes as having told her "there were options out there. . .and that was all I needed to survive—to save my queer soul." Sometimes not knowing your destination can be truly liberatory.

15. **"Look Out Weekend" by Debbie Deb (single on Jam Packed Records, 1984)**
While the bad ass Deborah Claire Wesoff-Kowalski (known of course as Debbie Deb) was born in Brooklyn and raised in **Miami**, she is an honorary Angelena as far as I am concerned. Her music was the soundtrack to many an Aqua Net set as my friends and I teased our bangs to untold heights to hit Roller City 2001, or later to attempt to rule the dance floor (and work out our Riverside-ness) at Hollywood's Florentine Gardens—a basketball gym-sized dance floor replete with go-go dancers, a taco bar on the patio, a dress-to-impress crowd and a broad spectrum of ground effects in the parking lot. We loved it so much we claimed the sound of Miami freestyle as "L.A. Disco." To this day, when I throw on Deb at a party, I can't help but smell Drakkar Noir and the scent of burning eyeliner pencils—well, how do *you* soften it to make your Cleopatra-eyes?. Then, as now, I used Deb's pounding beat, synth stabs, and tough girl vocals to armor myself for life's increasing challenges—to transform "Oh, what *now*?" into that world-famous and oh-so-necessary L.A. challenge "So *now* what?" And I thank her profusely for that.
16. **"West Coast Poplock" by Ronnie Hudson and the Street People (Single on HouseJam Records, 1982)** In this multi-layered song by early **Los Angeles** B-Boys, Ronnie Hudson and the Street People, you can hear the echoes of earlier hits—lyrical shout outs to "Rapper's Delight" by The Sugar Gang (1979) and Zapp and Roger's "So Ruff, So Tuff" (1981) as well as a killer hook borrowed from Booker T. and the M.G.'s "Bootleg" (1965)—and some really excellent futureshocks of the many L.A. acts to later sample it in songs like Mixmaster Spade and the Compton Posse's "Genius is Back" (1988), N.W.A.'s "Straight Outta Compton" (1988), Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg's "Nuthin' But a G Thang" (1992), and Tupac and Dr. Dre's much beloved monster hit "California Love" (1994). But you can also listen for the way its soundscape takes you back to the days when pop-locking ruled the scene so hard that Ronnie Hudson made a special version called "East Coast Poplock" to take the moves created by Don Campbell, a commercial art student at L.A. Trade Tech, all the way to the other coast.
17. **"Make Ya Neck Lock" by Medusa and Feline Science (Undaground Crewed, Project Blowed, 2002).** Another amazing fusion artist who should not be an LA-area secret, Medusa (also known as Baby NeNe, Triple Kahlua, Sister Monet, Medusa, Microfro, and that "cool-playa-pimp nigga Sean") began her long **Los**

Angeles reign as a 16 year old pop-locker with the Groove-Atrons and honed her rhyme talents at The Good Life Café (and later Project Blowed) in Leimert Park, along with Freestyle Fellowship, Yo Yo, J5 and the Pharcyde. Medusa, along with her live back-up band and hip hop crew Feline Science—which includes a DJ, drummer, bassist, keyboard, percussionist, guitar and background singers—has reigned supreme on the L.A. club circuit for many years, most famously transforming the Fais Do-Do on West Adams into her own personal queendom called “Nappy at the Roots”—a fecund female and queer-friendly performance space for innovative acts that fused musics from across the city like Quetzal, Wozani, and Burning Spear—where she always brought down the house. I can vouch—I was a devoted subject for all of the years I lived in L.A.

18. **“This Town” by Ceci Bastida with guest Tim Armstrong (Veo La Marea, EMI, 2008).** Ceci Bastida has been an integral part of the transborder music culture circulating between **Tijuana** and **Los Angeles** since age 15, when she joined what would become one of the most classic Rock en Español bands, Tijuana NO!, as a singer, keyboardist and songwriter. While with TN!, **Ceci collaborated with bands like Fishbone and Manu Chao.** After leaving the band in 2000, she played with Julieta Venegas’s band for seven years, whereupon she started her solo turn, from which this track is taken, a bi-lingual, multi-genre revisioning of the Go-Go’s 1980s Valley soundscape, one that reminds listeners that the founder of the Go-Go’s was actually Chicana punk rocker Margot Olvarria (who was eventually kicked out of the group for refusing to conform to the band’s shift from punk aggression to power pop harmonies). I’ll forgive her the guesting by Rancid’s Tim Armstrong, because I love this song so much, especially its movements from English to Spanish to Spanglish, its deft juxtapositions of sounds and musical styles, and the way it manages to be celebratory and confrontational all at once. It’s might be our town, but it’s still “so ruff, so tuff out here, baby.”
19. **“Here Comes the Sun” by Voodoo Glow Skulls (Who Is This Is?, Dr. Strange Records, 1994)** Founded in **La Sierra** (an unincorporated neighborhood in Riverside), Inland Empire Chicano punk-ska-metal band the Voodoo Glow Skulls have been at it since 1989. The “classic” line-up has a trio of brothers at its heart: Frank Casillas (Vocals), Eddie Casillas (Guitar) and Jorge Casillas (bass), with a pulse provided by Jerry O’Neill (drums), and the unique warped mariachi-1950s rock bop horn sounds provided by Joe McNally (trumpet), Joey Hernandez (sax), and Brodie Johnson (trombone). Confession: I have known Joe since elementary school and Brodie since he was a high school metal head and, even though I have some personal rough water under the bridge where VGS is concerned—an ex, and that’s all I will say about that—I haven’t stopped loving this song, a speeded-up Beatles cover that embodies the tensions, excitement, danger, and hope in California’s eternal promise of new beginnings. It’s rapid-fire chant calls to me now to remind me that “Little Girlie, it’s been so long since you been here.”