

### Simon and Garfunkel

I remember sitting ten rows back, watching the stage in awe. Standing there, side by side, were two quiet men. In front of them, a sea of faces, cut off abruptly by the rear of the theater. The crowd, most of them middle aged or older, were sitting quietly, staring back. Beside the two men on the stage were a couple of wooden stools, two microphones on long metal stands, and a guitar stand.

Everyone was waiting quietly, but impatiently, for the first chords of a song. The anticipation of the music that would soon fill the concert hall was tremendous. The excitement filled the air with an electricity that I could feel. Then, as if nothing was precious about those few moments spent waiting, the men on stage each took a breath, and then broke the tense mood. “Hello darkness, my old friend/ I’ve come to talk with you again ...and no one dared/ disturb the sound of silence.” They began a very apropos “The Sound of Silence.”

Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel were magical that evening; the dancing melody of their guitars, the carefully intertwined harmony of their voices, the poetic lyrics, all floated easily to the audience. I sang along—I knew all of the words—as did everyone else. I matched the inflection of their pronunciation—first Simon’s, and then Garfunkel’s—the pitch of their voices, even the nuances of their faces. The result was a tremendously fulfilling concert for me, for the audience, and (I’m sure) for Simon and Garfunkel as well.

Simon and Garfunkel formed in 1957. Growing up in New York City, both Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel lived the unique lifestyle that only New Yorkers know: majestic Central Park in

the winter, the loud, relentless subway, the artsy Village, expensive Fifth Avenue. They knew the city well, and many of the sights and experiences of New York are present in their music.

Like New York City, their sound was an aggregate of many styles, ranging from the intricate, yet simple harmonies of folk, to the sad guitar riffs of country, to the upbeat and danceable rhythms of rock. They reached out to many people as well—most young music listeners knew them, and they were accepted by the older crowd (a feat not achieved by rock music at that time). They profoundly influenced many musicians (they still do, today), yet they saw themselves as merely two New York boys trying to express themselves in the only way they knew—through their songs.

Listening to an album is an emotional rollercoaster: The climbing anticipation of life's possibilities, the exhilarating peaks of teenage exuberance, the depressing dips of failure and longing for love—only to end too soon, leaving one yearning for more. Each song evokes a different emotional reaction: “Old Friends” saddens with its quiet story of two lives that were at their end; “Cecilia” entices with the possibility of true love; “Me and Julio Down by the School Yard” remembers youth and its freedom. Each song is filled with emotions, both those put there by Simon and Garfunkel, as well as those I associate with them.

Many nights I laid in bed listening—well into the morning—to song after song, thinking about my life and my friends. This is where their importance—for me, anyway—lies: Their music is capable of taking me back to distinct moments in my life, forcing memories, both pleasant and sorrowful, to rise to the surface. One song, “America,” always reminds me of a girl I knew in high school. Things never worked out between us, but I still treasure the time we spent together, and

this song is the one I most associate with her (perhaps because the main female character of the song is named “Kathy”). Often we would listen to Simon and Garfunkel albums, singing along (she was also at the concert with me.)

For me, the most important aspect of music has always been the emotions it creates and reveals. Simon and Garfunkel certainly are capable of this, and more—the emotions contained within their songs are the most powerful and compelling of any musical group. Although Simon and Garfunkel are no longer together, their music continues to inspire and entertain.