

Texas Public Radio

2015: A Personal Year In Review

By NATHAN CONE · JAN 5, 2016

It was a great year for music, movies, and more, but as a working dad, I don't get out to see and hear as many things as I'd like to. Nevertheless I felt inspired to cobble together my own personal Best Of list for 2015. The items below aren't ranked traditionally, but instead are presented more or less chronologically. I hope you enjoy reading, and may 2016 be filled with joyful moments for you as well.

SOLI Chamber Ensemble: After coming off a musical high in late 2014 by taking part in a performance of Terry Riley's "In C" with [SOLI](#), I returned as a listener in February, 2015 to their "Dance" concert at the Tobin Center's Alvarez Theater. The collaboration with [Ballet San Antonio](#) brought out the hidden romantic side of Philip Glass's *Metamorphosis*, excellently rendered by pianist Carolyn True. The ensemble's four-person reduction of Richard Strauss's symphonic *Metamorphosen*, one of the most beautiful sad pieces of music ever written, about moved me to tears. Later in the fall I was honored to be a guest narrator at SOLI's concert featuring Karim Al-Zand's *Swimmy*. The music, based on the children's book by Leo Leoni, was a swirling, watery delight.

The Criterion Collection: My favorite video releases of the year came from the [Criterion Collection](#), a formerly under-the-radar boutique label whose cult has grown over time. *Sullivan's Travels*, *The Thin Blue Line*, *A Room With A View* and *Speedy* all lit up my television screen this year. Criterion not only presents the films in pristine video transfers, but they add oodles of bonus features in a day and age when most studios could care less about putting out catalog titles for the serious cinephile.

Inside Out: The collar of my T-shirt was damp with tears that came too fast and frequent for me to wipe away. Pixar's *Inside Out* is about an 11-year-old girl who's losing a bit of her childlike innocence, but discovering at the same time the way her emotions work together to make her memories more meaningful. As a parent, I naturally saw my own children in the film, but I also saw myself. When Riley's "islands" begin to crumble and she withdraws from her friends and family, I felt as if I was seeing a representation of early depression. Riley pulls through in the end, but learns that sadness and joy can and often do go hand in hand. Not Charles Manson. (Writer Karina Longworth's podcast was essential listening this year.)

You Must Remember This, Charles Manson's Hollywood: Forget *Serial*, *Making a Murderer*, or any other of the true crime podcasts and TV shows you can find out there. My favorite

waiting-with-baited-breath gotta download it every week show this year was the excellent [ten-part series](#) on "Charles Manson's Hollywood," part of writer [Karina Longworth's](#) fantastic podcast series, *You Must Remember This*, about secret and forgotten Hollywood stories. Throughout the summer, Longworth painted a vivid picture of Southern California in the 1960s, covering not only Manson's interactions with the Hollywood scene, including producer Terry Melcher, but going in-depth into Sharon Tate's life and career, Roman Polanski, and how Tate's murder influenced Polanski's own life and work thereafter. Everyone knows the basic story, but Longworth's thoroughly researched audio essays revealed hidden details, and connected the players to one another and the larger SoCal scene as a whole. Give a listen to [this episode about Manson and the Beach Boys](#), who recorded a Manson song for their album *20/20* just weeks before the Tate-LaBianca murders.

Studio B40: With the help of a full time intern funded by Bexar County, I was able to get two long-standing projects started this summer: a series of in-studio concerts featuring contemporary bands and songwriters, and a return to the archives of *Sunday Night Session*, TPR's old Texas Music show that was broadcast from 1996-2010 on KSTX 89.1 FM. Our intern [Miranda Whitus](#) was instrumental in booking and arranging the interviews and performances in our studios, and edited all of the video footage as well. You can find the complete [archives of the B40 project online here](#), and the beginnings of our *Sunday Night Session* [archive online here](#).

Ben & Jerry's Takes Texas: In the aftermath of Blue Bell Ice Cream's complete [clusterfluff](#) that led to three deaths and a [possible criminal investigation](#), Vermont-based Ben & Jerry's seized the opportunity to swoop in with their [#TexasChurned](#) tour, asking Texas residents to decide the state's official B&J flavor. Would it be Bar-B-Que Peach (surprisingly not bad) or Bourbon Pecan Pie? Fans got a chance to sample both flavors, and the overwhelming winner was Bourbon Pecan Pie, now found on shelves statewide. And in my freezer right now. I've given up on Blue Bell, and switched my allegiance to Ben & Jerry's.

Cinema Tuesdays Turns 15: Texas Public Radio's film series, [Cinema Tuesdays](#), celebrated its fifteenth anniversary this summer. What began as a simple way to offer an alternative to blockbusters during the summertime has become an integral part of TPR's identity, and a significant fundraiser for the organization as well. Plus, we had some blockbusters of our own, hosting record crowds at screenings of "Giant" and "A Hard Day's Night," among other films. This project is a labor of love, and I am thankful to you for making it happen!

Disney's Port Orleans Resort: This August my family and I visited my happy place, Walt Disney World, and stayed for the first time at the [Port Orleans Riverside](#) resort. One of the things I love about Disney is its attention to planning, design and detail at its theme parks and

resorts. The Port Orleans Riverside resort is far enough away from the hubbub of the parks to offer some peace and tranquility for weary parents, but not so far that the bus ride to the Magic Kingdom takes 45 minutes. The buildings are themed upon an old Mississippi River town that only ever existed in your imagination. You can take a leisurely riverboat ride to the Disney Springs shopping and entertainment district, or drop a line in the water to catch some trout or bass. The food court was typically chaotic, but the jambalaya at Boatwright's Dining Hall was tasty. Someday when I save up enough money and airline miles to afford it, I hope to go back.

Yellowfish Sushi: Technically, I first discovered [Yellowfish Sushi](#) in 2013 when a co-worker introduced me to the tiny shop on Wurzbach, but my family and friends know that 2015 marked the year that eating Yellowfish became a full-blown obsession for me. One that I couldn't keep up, of course, lest I go broke. But thank goodness for free miso soup with a Facebook check-in. Oh, they have \$4 Salsa Roja Salmon tacos? Sure, I can add that on to my order. Yellowfish specializes in what they call "Japamex," offering sushi rolls with spicy salsa and ingredients like fresh cilantro, citrus, and peppers. In 2015, Yellowfish opened a second location, at Bitters & Huebner. The music is still too loud inside, but the food is delicious, and fully customizable with a variety of yummy sauces and add-ons that add up.

Charles Yang & Peter Dugan: Busting wide open the notion of what a violin recital can be, [ARTS San Antonio](#)'s presentation of [Charles Yang](#) & Peter Dugan in concert was [one of my favorite shows of the year](#). Yang and Dugan had an easy rapport on stage with each other and with the audience as they moved effortlessly between Ravel, Vieuxtemps, Queen and Britney Spears. Yes, I was completely tickled by Peter Dugan's "Theme and Variations on 'Womanizer' by Britney Spears." Classical music covers of pop music often suck—but Yang and Dugan's arrangements were inspired and exciting. Walk don't run to see them the next time they're in your town.

BONUS: I can't leave the list alone without a passing mention of *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens*. J.J. Abrams I think was better suited to this than *Star Trek*. And it was great to see the Millennium Falcon fly again. I may have cried when Han & Leia's theme came on the soundtrack. John Williams is truly the glue that holds this saga together. I hope he lives forever. May the Force be with you.

And with that, what do *you* look forward to in 2016? Find me on [Twitter](#) or [email](#) anytime. I'd love to hear from you.