

Out of Bounds, Episode XLII: Monkey Business

Written by {ga=larshancock}

Friday, October 19 2012 8:50 AM - Last Updated Friday, October 19 2012 11:10 AM



Tomorrow night I get to go to an 80s party to celebrate my friend's 40th birthday. I will be donning the *Miami Vice* look of a white suit, salmon sleeveless and collarless shirt, and wayfarers, which is sure to be awesome and horrifying at the same time. Earlier in the week, however, the costume of choice was going to be a tweed jacket and my Hart for President t-shirt, which my wife reminded me that I had safely tucked away in my closet.

Yes, I have a Hart for president shirt, authentic, from 1987.

To the younger viewers, Gary Hart was the Democratic frontrunner in the 1988 presidential race. The Democrats had just been routed in 1984 by Reagan, and Hart was viewed as the sort of charismatic leader who could restore hope to their party, and early polls indicated such was a reality. However, Mr. Hart couldn't seem to be faithful to his wife, and in their most glorious moment the *National Enquirer* (the TMZ of the pre-internet day) broke the news of his longstanding affair with a former Miss South Carolina (who appeared in an episode of *Miami Vice*), Donna Rice. Back in the puritanical good ol' days of 1987, such a scandal killed a politician's career, and when this news broke, Gary Hart dropped out of the race.

Shift scenes to an idyllic Massachusetts college campus later that fall. Doe-eyed freshman Lars Hancock is just starting to enjoy his first semester in college. Sporting a full butt-cut head of feathered hair and rocking acid washed jeans, young Lars cares not about his education, but cares greatly about chicks and booze, and he isn't all that particular about what he scores in either category, just that he does.

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Enter Brian, a recently graduated alumnus who previously had lived in Lars' dorm visits campus. He is returning to prey on the impressionable youth like some sort of past-day Blake from *Glengarry Glen Ross*, harvest clueless and innocent minions for his political task of the day like the Grim Reaper claims souls. He had become a Democratic activist, and seeing how the party was about to nominate the feckless Mike Dukakis to try to break the eight-year slump, Brian's mission was to get Gary Hart back in the race. Hart was the Grady Sizemore of the Democratic team back in the day – superstar potential, but damaged goods. Dukakis was Aaron Cunningham - only the most deluded Democrat thought he was worth anything. And Brian is the Chris Antonetti, on campus recruiting because he knew going into the season with the likes of Cunningham was a clear recipe for failure, and signing Sizemore and hoping for a miracle is his best shot. It was a longshot, and probably wouldn't work, but it was the only shot they had.

Young Lars is a politically agnostic kid. The world was humming along peacefully, the Berlin wall was going to fall in a couple of years, the economy was strong, and Lars couldn't give two craps about any of that anyway. I was neither a Republican nor a Democrat – the only party I was interested in was the Keg Party at Tappa Kegga Bru. So when this Brian guy comes to town and promises a huge party with lots of girls, it was on like Donkey Kong – I was going to New Hampshire to get Gary Hart back in the race.

We load into a van, and wind up in some strange home around midnight. Among the 20 or so people there are two bitter and angry women, upset at something unbeknownst to me, and not a drop of alcohol. It's okay, it's late, the party will surely be raging tomorrow. We do some planning and sign making and stuff and tuck in for the night.

The memories are hazy from that weekend, but next thing I remember I'm on the campus of Saint Anselm college holding signs and chanting "Draft Hart for President" and "Still the Best". It is early December, and it is about 4 degrees outside, and I'm wearing a light coat and no socks with my Docksiders, because that's what you did in 1987. I'm dressed to party, and I'm freezing my nuts off working for a cause I don't give a rat's ass about. Sadly, at some point in the day, I realize in my cold misery that there isn't going to be a party, there aren't going to be any women, and I'm a Grade A sucker.

The only positive memory I have is that on the way home, we hear the Bangles' *Hazy Shade of Winter* in the van for the first time. I also have a t-shirt, a shirt that I earned and which will bring a chuckle and remind me to be vigilant of snake oil salesmen for decades to come. And I have a fresh lesson

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learned of how politicians will say whatever they want to get their desired end: power. The brutal cold that floors me for the next two weeks is a metaphor of what happens to us voters in the process.

So to those of you disgusted at watching two candidates lie and smear each other like we saw this Tuesday night, just remember – that's the way the system has always been. And make no mistake about it – they both lied throughout the debate, overtly, and didn't care if you knew. Just like Brian did to me that brutal hazy-shaded winter weekend in New England.

Anyway, off to the questions.

Let's just say for conversation sake my Uncle isn't really the dredge on society persona as often depicted here and is considering Lasik surgery. He is sick of glasses although he currently wears the "lightest" corrective prescription out there. The glasses get in the way (so you could guess he is a sniper, welder, microbiologist, watch-maker, scuba diver ...something like that), and forget contacts.

My partner had it done no problem. One of my best friends had it done at a world class clinic in N.E. Ohio and has been back twice for "correction" and is still f%^&cked up. Uncle has seen most folks do fine with some loss of peripheral vision. Uncle is on the fence. Have you any "insight"? If anyone out there has any personal experience or recommendations please advise. - pod & uncle

About six years ago, I had Lasik, and I had just about the worst Lasik experience you could possibly have. And I'd go through it 100 times again to get the life-altering results I've attained from having the procedure done.

I have two interesting and diametrically-opposed medical anomalies about me which led to the misery. First, I have an extremely high drug tolerance, meaning if you give me four times the dosage of painkillers it takes to kill your average horse, I just barely start to feel tingly. Second, I have an extremely low drug tolerance, meaning if you give me half the infant dosage of the same painkillers, it makes me vomit for hours. Good times.

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So I get the round of drugs – the valium, the numbing drops, and they put me under the machine, and literally right before they start to cut my eyes with a laser, there's a software bug. I'm sent home where I proceed to sleep and then vomit, and then get called back to the office because the software is fixed.

Mind you, I'm not filled with a ton of confidence at this point, for reasons I don't need to explain. I'm offered another valium, which I refuse, my eyes get a few more drops of numbing agent in them, and it's go time. The laser hits my eye, and despite my exhortations to the doctor to overnumb me because of my drug tolerance, I realize that the doctor did not take my advice seriously, and I feel the laser hitting my eye. Not happy.

A few more drops, and the procedure is done, and I'm sent home. It is at this point where I realize that the massive dose of Valium they give you previously is specifically designed to make you sleep afterward, because the next three hours are the worst eye pain you will ever experience in your life. Imagine you're in the desert during a sandstorm and your eyes are pinned open. For three hours.

After a couple of hours of screaming into my pillow, the pain subsides, and lo and behold I can see! And what a miracle it is. Wearing normal sunglasses, reading things from distance, the simple things in life that some people take for granted are beautiful to me. That which does not kill you makes you stronger, and lasik is in that boat.

I'm sure your experience can't be any worse than that. Do it immediately – the only regret you will have is not doing it sooner.

Lars, what do you hand out to kids on Halloween? –googleeph2

The rule of thumb with Halloween candy is don't hand anything out that you yourself wouldn't eat. There are two reasons for this: 1) if you have leftovers, you have candy that doesn't suck, and 2) kids won't egg your house for being the dickhead that's handing out candy corn.

Good candy includes Snickers, anything from Hershey or Reese's, M&Ms, Smarties, and gum.

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Don't deviate from this – every kid likes this stuff, and every parent likes to steal this stuff from their kids. One year I worked at Hershey and was able to get about fifty tons of candy for \$1.99. I gave out giant fistfuls of it, and the neighborhood kids erected a statue in my honor later that evening (I think it still stands in Sagamore Hills). Hero.

That's the key to being a house that kids talk about – good candy, and fistfuls of the stuff. This year it looks like M&Ms, but I'll probably sneak some Reese's products in there because I fucking love that magic peanut butter.

By the way, in the Hancock household we are firm believers in recycling. No, not the waste of taxpayer resources throwing your trash in blue bins is, that's proven bad math and completely useless for the environment. Instead, when my kids come back from begging in the neighborhood, we go through their bags and take all the lousy stuff and put it in the bowl to hand out to the late night trick or treaters. As the late night crowd is the older kids, high school kids dressed as "apathetic high school kid" who are more extorting you for sugar than trick or treating, they are entitled to crap and only crap. Here, take some Necco wafers, Swedish fish, and candy corn. It sucks and so do you.

This is not really a Van Halen question, although it might seem so. It seems that most people prefer the Van Halen fronted by David Lee Roth and are quick to dismiss the Sammy Hagar era. I find the majority of these people to be insufferable assholes. While I completely understand preferring the Diamond Dave iteration, it is my experience that the majority of those who dismiss the Sammy era do so because they think they are supposed to. Essentially, all of the "cool kids" always told them that the Lee Roth Halen was the only worthy lineup, and so they accepted this due to fear of castigation and/or the inability of independent thought compounded with a lack of convictional courage.

What I'd like is for you to rank the Van Halen albums up to but NOT including the Gary Cherone debacle (for obvious reasons). And once you've done this I'd like you to consider David Lee Roth's seminal solo album Eat 'Em and Smile. Where would EEAS fall on a list of Van Halen albums? This is what I really want to know. –motherscratcher

Excluding the live album and best-of albums, the order for Van Halen albums could be as follows:

1. 1984. Jump, Panama, and Hot for Teacher are easily recognized classics from this album which came from the band's peak of popularity.

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2. Van Halen. Their debut in 1978 is just solid throughout, probably their best work cover to cover, even the B side.
3. 5150. Sammy Hagar's first offering was very good and contains some of their concert staples today, including Dreams.
4. Van Halen II. A good album released in 1979 with some hits and some notable misses, it clearly established the band as an up and comer, and gave them a firm foundation to allow them to be the super-band they became.
5. Fair Warning. The 1981 album is solid throughout, but lacks the star power of their other work. Kind of like the Oakland A's of albums.
6. Diver Down. The 1982 offering is largely cover songs, which makes it a ton of fun but less of an accomplishment musically. If I'm being honest with you, I'd listen to this over Fair Warning more often than not, but it isn't as good musically when you get right down to it.
7. OU812. The 1988 album was big in my college days, but I'm not going to let that nostalgia overrank it. It was a pretty average album. The band clearly was struggling at this point to maintain relevance musically, even if they could sell over 5 million albums by simply farting into microphones.
8. Balance. Sammy's final album in 1995 recorded as the band was collapsing, it was a respectable but not spectacular offering.
9. Women and Children First. the 1980 offering was transitional and largely forgettable, with some good moments to be sure.
10. For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge. The 1991 offering was trying too hard to be bad, it succeeded, but not in the way it they intended...

Now, Eat 'Em and Smile will get overrated here just because I loved it so much growing up. Dave's over-the-top style, flamboyance, and near-pornographic videos touched a nerve with the teenagers of the day, like me, and really made his music a whole heck of a lot of fun. Musically? Great lyrics, catchy tunes, but guitar work far inferior to what Eddie Van Halen could produce. But who cares? EEAS isn't pretending to be *Citizen Kane*. It's *Debbie Does Dallas*, a classic in its own special way.

You can't compare it to 1984, so let's not be foolish and do so. Is it better than Van Halen? No, probably not. More fun, but musically hollow, you're comparing a good Snickers bar to a good steak here. I think it is every bit the album of 5150 though, with higher highs and lower lows, and enough substance to make it preferable overall. So EEAS is likely #3 on this list.

Lars, what kind of sick Nazi invented the nick tie? –CDT

Lars, Is there ever a socially accepted ,or time at all where wearing a bow tie is OK?

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-pods uncle

The necktie is the ultimate expression of human vanity. Essentially it allows people a dash of flamboyance in the otherwise staid and conservative uniform acceptable in business today. A man wants to wear shiny red silk cloth covered in paisleys, but unless you're Hugh Hefner, you can't get away with that in the work world. So what do you do? Necktie!

It seems as if neckties evolved from scarves worn around the neck for just this very reason - vanity. It started out as a customization to a military uniform, and evolved into the noose we use today to restrict the bloodflow to our heads. Is it uncomfortable? Sure. Pointless? Absolutely. But think how boring an army of businessmen in blue suits would be if they all didn't have a flash of color in the middle of their bodies. Lunch in Manhattan would look like a scene from *The Wall*, with businessmen walking into the meat grinder that is their jobs. We Americans are far too individualist to be without a necktie – think of it as an uncomfortable flag of rebellion around your neck.

As for bowties, ignoring formal occasions where a bowtie is required with a tux, I'd suggest that every other time is perfectly acceptable for wearing a bowtie. That's the funny thing about a bowtie – it is an antiquated form of a tie, yet it is still perfectly acceptable to the rules of business. I actually wear bowties a lot, just because I can, and because it gives me a subtle edge in a meeting. Remember, the necktie itself is a symbol of individualism and rebellion, so a bowtie puts that on steroids, rebelling against the conformal nature of the blue suit-red tie power look which has become stock and stale.

When I wear a bowtie, I am intentionally doing a number of things in a meeting. First of all, I'm throwing you off. You don't expect my bowtie, and here it is, and you're staring at this psychedelic butterfly around my neck like a hippie at a Phish show. Also, I'm telling you that I'll play by the rules – for now - but I don't care about them either. I'm telling you I'm confident, confident enough to wear a stupid looking bowtie to this meeting where I'm clearly going to be the oddball. And I'm telling you that I've got some crazy skills you just don't want to fuck with, because I can tie a bowtie. Oh, and if you happen to underestimate me because I'm the goofball in the bowtie, I'll be snacking on your jugular here in a bit.

In conclusion, a bowtie is the ultimate power move in a negotiation. And since every meeting should be part of the negotiation process, you've just given yourself the upper hand.

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You're a swing bridge operator. □ That's a bridge that rotates horizontally for motherscratcher and CDT. □ Yours is a railroad bridge that spans over a half a mile across a lake. □ So one summer day it's time to rotate the bridge to the closed position so the passenger train can cross the lake. □ As you see the train quickly bearing down on the bridge you notice a young boy in playing in the middle of the bridge, and it's your son. □ There is not enough time for you to run and grab him, nor enough for him to run to safety before the train would reach him. □ The train is carrying 100 passengers across the 100ft deep lake, and your son cannot swim.

Would you close the bridge to allow the train to cross the lake, saving the lives of 100 strangers, which would bring an end to your son's life? □ Or would you leave the bridge open allowing the train to crash into the lake killing all 100 people but saving the life of your son? –FUDU

This is easy – you have to save the lives of the many above the life of the one, despite how much you love the one and how big of putzes the many likely are. You do that every time without thought or remorse.

Think about if you do the opposite. Your son grows up knowing that you saved his life and killed 100 people as a result of it. You're in jail as a result of this, and he is growing up fatherless and racked with guilt. Remember the first and last scene from *Saving Private Ryan*, where the now-old Ryan visits the grave of Tom Hanks' John Miller. 50 years later, he is haunted by Miller's last words "earn this." He's still racked with guilt that ten men died to save his life, and he has doubted his whole life that he was worthy of such a sacrifice. That torture is what you give your son by saving his life, and that is an extremely heavy burden for any man to bear. I wouldn't wish that albatross on my worst enemy, let alone my most loved ones.

By the way, in this hypothetical situation, things are clearly my fault here. He's obviously visiting me at work, and I am obviously negligent in his care and monitoring in allowing this to happen. An analogous scenario can happen at any time to a parent who has neglected their primary duties to steward their progeny responsibly and diligently, and parents can't harm or blame society for their negligence. And while the situations of daily life aren't ever as severe as your question, even the most minor of parental neglect can cause societal damage if not addressed properly and proactively. It makes me sad, and angry, to see parents abdicate their duties as easily as they often do...

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Please email questions to lars.hancock@yahoo.com, tweet them @ReasonsImADrunk, or DM them to me in the forae to LarsHancock. And remember, vote Lars for President in 2012.