

The Jazz of LAX

J.R. Wudel
December 2021

My music collection ranges through the alphabet, from Aerosmith to Zappa and all letters in between. Now, I'm listening to Tom Waits, working on the eighteenth hour of a twenty-nine hour stay at LAX. I have come short of inventing new positions to fit my body into the unforgiving airport chairs.

I remember the song that made me minutes late for my flight. The baton passed over the buttons of my shirt creating a rhythmic beep.

"See, it is music," said the lady with the baton in hand.

"Yeah, but you can't dance to it," I replied with a faint side smile—stealing a line from some past comedy.

"Please turn around," the lady called out, continuing her security check with her own little smirk on her face, as she forced me to dance along.

In my chair, my guitar at my feet like a trusty dog waiting for a pat, my mind becomes an antennae and receiver picking up the non-stop music of the airport on this Christmas weekend. I hear over a hundred stations to tune into, as hundreds of people move in and out of my senses. My search of the stations comes to an end. I find a song that eases my fatigued body. It plucks at my heart like a love song disguised as a pair of soft leather boots with an almost elfin cut sitting at the row of chairs directly across from me. The toes, seeming to point right through me, swell

in a motion that I imagine the chest of the one they belong to. I am much too self-conscious to allow my eyes to roam north of the knee or to meet the chance eye-to-eye encounter.

How much have I lost due to this ignorance? I always arrested myself for looking when there are much more heinous crimes. How I long for the pleasure of looking into a woman's eyes. How I long for a Rosetta Stone to help me translate their actions and ways into a language I can understand. Although, I know even as I write these words that they contain the same sleep inducing effect as the anesthesiologist's drug. I must cap the pen like covering the needle, for I know that these words cannot make you dance.

I know what I must give back to the song in soft leather and all the stations that surround me. These people entertained me for the hours of my stay and deserve a song and dance of my own. They deserve from me the gift of jazz. A music structured out of the beat of the people walking by, their holiday laughter or complaints of a spilt soda. They deserve a song that ascends the spontaneity of life and becomes a living extension of myself: a hand, a heart and a voice.