

Declan McKenna brings “protest songs” to MN

Cari Spencer
Editor in Chief

Outside of an unassuming beige building, a line of teenagers donning Fresh Prince of Bel-Air-esque windbreakers and mom jeans stretched all the way out to the street, waiting to pour into the Burnsville Civic Center on March 13. Two hours later, they would see a 19-year-old indie artist from London dance around the Garage stage in a sparkly bowler hat and gold tights. But for now, they waited, buzzing from excitement, or perhaps the cold.

Inside, the atmosphere of the venue was like an 80s or 90s time capsule party, from the dress of the concert-goers to the music played before the artists came on stage. Even without a live performer, the audience screamed out lyrics to whatever the intermission stereo played—from “Take on Me” by A-Ha to “Gimmie! Gimmie! Gimmie!” by ABBA—and danced with each other, regardless of being friends or not. The wake-up call of 2018 came with the air-dropping of memes from iPhone to iPhone, every 30 seconds; a sign of classic 21st century behavior.

“All of the people were super nice, and we had this kind of community where we

all loved this artist who isn’t very well-known,” junior Alexis Mullen said. “We were taking pictures at the wall and everyone was cheering us on saying ‘Yes! Slay!’ It was just a great kind of community.”

Declan McKenna was the main event of the night. Before he took the stage, he was opened by Chappel Roan, a female singer from Missouri who made many new fans, judging from the various “your voice is iconic!” screams that sprung out from the crowd. She played a few songs from her EP *School Night*, but since most didn’t know her lyrics the crowd got the most fired up when she covered “Dreams” by the Cranberries, an Irish rock band that rose to popularity in the 90’s.

By 7:30 p.m., when McKenna took the stage, the audience was already amped up on music and life, but the show had only begun. As soon as he appeared, the crowd surged forward to get a closer view, as if an extra 6 feet of space had appeared out of nowhere. With an audience composed primarily of high school kids, it was fitting for the set list to begin with “The Kids Don’t Wanna Come Home” from his sophomore album *What Do You Think About the Car?* Nearly everybody in the audience responded by screaming then

moving along as they sung the anthem back to him.

For reasons beside the name itself, “The Kids Don’t Wanna Come Home” was the perfect start to the concert; in an interview with *New Musical Express*, McKenna said that the song is about young people being a movement of change despite the darkness in the world. The rest of the concert seemed to live out that meaning. From “Bethlehem” to “Paracetamol” teenagers were singing along to lyrics that demanded change—whether it be change from religious corruption, a patriarchal society or the misrepresentation of transgender issues in mainstream media.

Each song that McKenna blessed the audience with was a nostalgic concoction of catchy guitar riffs and old-school pop, with a more modern use of synth. The whole performance was raw, his characteristic lisp-like blending of words endearing and genuine; there was no autotune or pre-recorded vocal track, but that’s what made him believable. He was real—a real musician and a real dude—playing exceptional songs, and feeling wherever the music took



Photo/ Cari Spencer

19-year-old Declan McKenna interacts with the crowd.

him that day. In many of his songs, the drum beat was switched up from the studio recorded versions, but it worked well.

“You’re a lively bunch,” McKenna said, smiling at the crowd in the same semi-shy way any normal teenager in front of a crowd would. Although he was comfortable enough to make a few jokes (noteable was his comment about bringing a mini Sprite on stage so he could say “Hello Mini-soda!”—to which the crowd, in his own words, laughed more than the joke deserved), it was clear that he was

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Sunflower Bean debuts shoegaze album *Twentytwo in Blue*

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Alt-rock sensations Sunflower Bean debuted their second full-length album on March 23. *Twentytwo in Blue* is a mellow yet melodic coming-of-age album for the rock trio. Having not released any new material since 2016, the band’s eagerness and musical energy are boundless in the creation and release of this eleven track LP, or full length album.

The band, consisting of Julia Cummings, Nick Kivlen, and Jacob Faber, blossomed in Brooklyn, New York. It originated while the trio were still in high school in 2013, according to Mom+Pop Record Label. They released their first EP, or half of a full length album, *Show Me Your Seven Secrets* two years after forming the band and began embarking on tours across the United States.

Due to their success, they were picked up by Fat Possum Records early on in their career. However, they moved on to Mom+Pop Record Label for releasing their latest album, according to Mom+Pop Record Label’s website.

Their unique sound combines distorted guitar and bass sounds creating psychedelic melodies. Cummings brings the band together with her one of a kind edgy vocals. Their early work seems to accurately reflect their not so secretive teenage angst. Grinding the sounds of their instruments together, the band is known for their modern grit and heavy garage rock sound.

However, *Twentytwo in Blue* strays from this preconceived notion of who the members of Sunflower

Bean are as musicians. This album wanders down a much more melodic shoegaze path, unlike their previous releases. This means that in the recording of the songs, the musical instruments and vocalization seemingly blend together. It is apparent that the band spent a great amount of time writing, producing and fine tuning this record as it displays their hard work.

Songs like “Twentytwo” and “Only A Moment” are softer and sweeter than most of their previous work. Combining new elements like tambourine and backing string sections, it’s obvious in these songs that the band has instrumentally widened their horizon. The guitar playing is focused more on softer soloing and melodic rhythm sections, rather than their previous use of solely heavy guitar distortion.

Julia’s writing style has progressed as she sings, “If I could do it I would take her in my arms/ I would unwrong all his wrongs/ I could stay here and write a thousand songs/ just to show her that the stars still come out behind the fog.” This is only a tiny sliver of lyrical sophistication present on this album.

She also sings about themes such as growing up and reflecting back on previous events in songs like “I Was a Fool.” This album no doubt shows the thoughtful side to Sunflower Bean’s writing ability and image.

Combining their rock edge with their obvious passion for making and playing music, the band has had no trouble being picked up for tours and festivals. Ticket sales have gone hand in hand with record sales and overall listeners. The band has over 282,000 monthly listeners on Spotify.

Sunflower Bean will make their way to the Midwest during the summer portion of their album promotion tour. I would recommend grabbing tickets to go see this talented young band play an 18+ show at 7th Street Entry in Minneapolis. The show takes place on June 27 and costs \$14 per ticket, according to First Avenue’s website.

Overall, I would give this album a nine/ten rating as I enjoyed it extensively. If the band blended a couple of their song transitions together, leaving no space between tracks, it would have made the record even better. You can find *Twentytwo in Blue* on all music streaming sites such as iTunes, Spotify and Bandcamp. It is available for purchase for around \$9.99. Special edition colored vinyl copies are also available online for order around \$20.



Photo/ Paul Hudson

The band performing live.

Ty Segall brings some punk to Minneapolis

Nikki Praus
Editor in Chief

Ty Segall and Freedom Band played at First Avenue on Apr. 7, and it was nothing less than completely wild. The Bed Band came before Ty Segall late Saturday night and there were some more mixed feelings about his performance. There were drinks thrown at the one man show while people cheering him on. A classic example that ‘Minnesota nice’ can, and will, prevail.

Ivan Antonio, who is in The Bed Band, truly confused the crowd while wearing a flannel over his face and smashing cardboard mountains over his head. People honestly tried to get into his performance and would cheer him on, even when others were booing. It was a loose, strange, confusing performance but with some Lou Reed tendencies and psychedelic guitar, people started to feel it.

Time passed and Ty Segall blessed the crowd with what they all came for, a concert that made you go, “wow.” I have never been to a punk concert and the experience was something I’ll never forget. Ty Segall constantly surprised me with slow beginnings or

psychedelic rifts that would switch into an extremely punk sound within two seconds. The band played one song after the other with almost no commentary to the crowd besides a, “this is awesome, thank you.” This allowed people to really get into the songs and the overall concert.

Ty Segall started off with “Alta,” an example of a song that started off slow, then completely slapped you in the face with punk. It was the perfect amount of happy and intense which kept people on their toes and excited. I don’t think one person left the concert without being drenched in some sweat accompanied by a smile.

Some may think people who are into punk would be punks, but it was the opposite. You would get a hand helping you up or a, “I’m so sorry,” if you got an elbow to the face. That may sound like an obvious thing to do, but I’ve been to concerts where grown men trampled me, so this was a breath of fresh air. Everyone just wanted to have a good time and people would honestly try and help you have it.

“It was such a new experience and incredibly fun,” senior Anna Hutter said.

Spicy jams to freshen up your playlist

Ajalon Peterson
Staff Reporter

Few things are able to bring people together more than music; it is a language entirely its own. A song can melodically string lyrics and acoustics together to convey a certain emotion or message. It can transport you to an exact moment in time, or remind you of a certain person. The beautiful thing about it is that everyone has their own unique music taste. For many of us, it plays a key role in defining who we are.

If you're looking for some new tunes to listen to, here are fourteen of my favorites, old and new.

Alt-J- This group joined together in 2007 to form what we know today as a sort of indie rock/pop conglomerate. The band's symbol is a delta (Δ), symbolizing change. They've got some pretty diverse stuff, ranging from upbeat to soulful. They're a very well known group; you can't really go wrong with Alt-J. Favorites: "Breezeblocks," "Left Hand Free," "Deadcrush."

Bon Iver- Indie folk band Bon Iver really grasps what music is, and transforms it. This is what it means to really feel music. Past albums *For Emma, Forever Ago*, and *Bon Iver* both have a soulful feel, while newest album *22, A Million* is simply abstract. This collection of songs is completely raw and unrefined; incomparable to other artists. The group seems to stray a bit from the multi-instrumental folk-music vibe that they are known for, and pave a completely different path with new electronic features. While the group has turned a new leaf style wise, the remarkable thing is they haven't lost any of the emotion. You can still feel the equally weighty messages, simply woven in a different fabric, so to speak. Favorites: "Holocene," "29 #Strafford APTS," "33 'GOD,'" "Re: Stacks."

BORNS- Although most will recognize the name by radio hit "Electric Love," few actually listen to his other music (which

is, in my opinion, better). 26 year old Garrett Borns rose to fame from Grand Haven, Michigan. If I could choose a word to describe him, it would be iconic. That sounds horribly cringe worthy and cliché, but it's true. He made vogue coverage this year by breaking gender stereotypes and wearing short shorts at Coachella. He is truly one of the few musicians that I can click shuffle, and love every song. Freshman Garrett Pesch, an avid fan, remarks, "I feel like their music really made me who I am today, it inspired my edgy side." Touring: Basilica block party, July 7. Favorites: "Past lives," "Fool," and the entire *Blue Madonna* album.

Cold War Kids- I had always heard the name, but I had never actually listened to their music. Huge mistake. They are right up there with the Killers in terms of general rock music umbrella. I haven't seen them live, but their collection of live music on Spotify is enough to convince me to buy a ticket when they come to Minneapolis. Favorites: "First," "So Tied Up," "Hang Me Up To Dry," "Hospital Beds (live)."

Dan & Drum- A personal favorite of mine. I'm not really sure how I found these two, but I'm glad I did. They are classified as R&B/Soul, although I've never heard anything quite like them before. I am completely in love with this band of two. Their singer, Dan, has very rich vocals. Their stuff isn't for everyone, and it can be hit or miss, but I would definitely say it's worth a listen. They haven't had a tour yet and only play in their local area, but you can bet when they come to Minneapolis you'll find me there. Favorites: "Lester," "Wanna Ride," "Mona Lisa," "You'll Find."

Early Eyes- I would classify this local Minneapolis band as indie-pop. They're a really nice, down to earth group of guys. I met them when they played at the Garage this past month, and they were really interactive with the audience. They only have eight songs, but you can tell they

have a lot of potential, and I can't wait until they come out with new music. Touring: Pure Rock Studios in Rochester on June 1st, Basilica block party on July 6 & 7. Favorites: "Waste of Time," "Coffee," "Take You," "All it Will Be," "Sunrise."

Glass Animals- This group's music is undeniably unique; each song is an experience all it's own. What many people don't know is that Dave Bayley, a member of the band, is obsessed with the minute details of the music. He has a degree in neuroscience and spent a few years traveling, meeting strangers, and recording his stories. Each song in their 2016 album, *How To Be A Human Being*, is based off an individual inspired by the lives of the strangers Bayley met. The group is quirky, to say the least. In an interview with DIY magazine, the group mentioned how one of their members was arrested in Milwaukee while climbing naked over a street sign. "First, he got arrested. That's not really much of a surprise. We know he had to pay a lot of bail in America, but we don't know how much. Anyway, he was climbing a road sign over the road, and yesterday he told us that he was totally naked when he got arrested. I think there's a lot more to this story," lead vocalist Dave Bayley said. Favorites: "Gooey," "The Other Side Of Paradise," "Youth," "Pork Soda," "Season two Episode three," "Life Itself."

Happy Fits- This group replaced the traditional electric bass with an acoustic cello, making for a fresh new sound. The band only has seven songs, but that doesn't stop them from creating a unique impact on the indie music brand. They don't seem to have "found their sound" yet, as many of their

songs each have a vibe completely different from the rest. Personally I love this about them, but I think they have a lot of potential to embrace and use to their advantage. Favorites: "Too Late," "Dirty Imbecile."

Hippo Campus- You either know this band and love it, or you have not yet had the pleasure of being introduced. Their Spotify description describes how their music started on the road, and how "the back of that van becomes a home. The rest of the world turns dim and hazy. The only concrete thing you have is a trunk converted into a makeshift bed and your three best friends..." They're local from St. Paul, and very loved by their hometown, to say the least. Their music never really gets old. Favorites: I love all of them. You couldn't possibly make me choose.



Graphic/ Apple Music
Hippo Campus

The Killers- When you mention the Killers to someone, they will usually say they haven't heard of them. Mention their hit song *Mr. Brightside*, however, and everyone will know who you are talking about. They are one of my all time favorites, for sure. When I think of alt-rock, they usually come to mind. Favorites: "Rut," "Wonderful Wonderful," "Flesh And Bone," "The Man," "Run For Cover."

Panic! At The Disco- You've probably heard of them, but they're too good not to mention. They're the perfect artist for when you're driving through the city with friends and need music that you can all sing (scream) along with. Need I say more?

Touring: Wednesday, July 11 at the Target Center. Favorites: "Don't Threaten Me With A Good Time," Say Amen (Saturday Night)," "Death Of A Bachelor," "Victorious," "Miss Jackson."

SAFIA- Introduced to me by a local taxi driver, this Australian electronica/indie pop band has a distinctive vibe. It's kind of a hit or miss (I only like a few of their songs), but I think that they are worth listening to at least once. The electronic element vaguely reminds me of Glass Animals, but only slightly. I'd be surprised if you could find a group like them. Favorites: "Listen to Soul," "Listen to Blues," "Make Them Wheels Roll," "Together," "Locked Safely."

Sylvan Esso- This group consists of Amelia Meath (vocals), and Nick Sanborn (instrumentals). This duo is undeniably compatible; each one brings such a unique element to the music, but it works perfectly. It's hard to put in to words, but the vocals and instrumental elements are just so incredibly blended. You have to love when just two people are able to create such beautiful music. Touring: Surly Brewing Festival Field, July 20 (18+). Favorites: "Coffee," "Hey Mami," "Die Young."

Young the Giant- This band has become pretty popular lately and leans farther towards the indie rock category. I wouldn't say they are entirely unique, but they've got some pretty good stuff. Definitely some playlist staples. Touring: catch them on Friday, July 13 at Lakefront Music Fest 2018. Unfortunately they are touring with country music artists. If you enjoy that type of thing it might be a good idea to attend, although you definitely won't see me there. Favorites: "Something To Believe In," "Silvertongue," "Cough Syrup."

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socially and environmentally sustainable when vacationing while still having a great time!

Once an individual is finally in a country, there are even more ways to practice this type of tourism. The 'leave no trace' slogan that originated for the preservation of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area is a great way to guide tourism. This idea can extend into all parts of touring, from limiting trash production to limiting fossil fuel use to appreciating wildlife without touching it. They can also buy local foods and souvenirs, which stimulates the economy of the place and decreases emissions. All of these things can be done very easily with minimal planning and will still be beneficial.

Governments play a huge role in the sustainability of the tourism industry as well. Not only do they set policies for where tourists are allowed to go, how many are allowed to come, and what they are allowed to do, but they are also responsible for

educating people about what is and isn't beneficial. The main way for governments to advance sustainable tourism is by increasing signage and regulations about what is allowed in certain places and by teaching their own citizens how to act when visiting another place. They also need to work in conjunction with environmental agencies to protect natural areas from overuse.

We still have a long way to go as far as complete sustainability in tourism goes, however we are surely on the right track. Agencies like Nature Conservancy, which work with local communities to stimulate the economy through tourism while simultaneously working to protect the environment are part of the solution, however individuals and governments still play a significant role.

"I think we still have a ways to go before we reach ecotourism in the full definition, but that shouldn't stop us from aspiring to that," said Jeff Soderstrom, prominent member of the Save the Boundary Waters organization.

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unchanged by fame. He seemed like a regular kid, albeit one with pipes and a knack for writing thought-provoking lyrics.

McKenna's chance at a "regular" life ended in 2015 when, at just 16 years old, he won the Glastonbury Emerging Talent competition with his original and now most popular song "Brazil." The alternative single delves into the corruption of international soccer as well as the destruction FIFA 2014 wreaked on many Brazilians. Although the subject is heavy, the hook is catchy and surreal, and as soon as the opening beats filled the room it was as if the floor turned into a trampoline.

There was little room for wide elbow movement, but in a way, it was better that way. McKenna's music fit the intimate setting; regardless of being at the front or the back of the crowd every-

body in the audience was close to him in a way that would be reserved for only a fraction of concert-goers at a venue like the Xcel Energy Center. Besides, there's something beautiful about a room full of sweaty teenagers, hearts full and throats dry, singing out songs together—songs that are a bit of a protest, really.

It's not just romance and parties that teens want to sing about—it's politics and corruption and a million shades of emotion too. McKenna has recognized that, and he's come across as all the more likeable for it. Without a doubt, anybody should give him a listen, not just for the rhythm and his voice, but for the meaning as well. His performance and the vibe at the Garage was a memorable five out of five experience—one that included crowd surfing and a free meet and greet afterwards—and for just \$15 tickets it felt like he should've been getting tipped.