



MUSIC LISTS

NPR Music's Essential Songs, Albums, Performances And Videos Of 2017 (So Far)

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Is music an escape from the world or the key to it? Over and over, when we began considering the best music of the first half of 2017, politics seemed to intrude, whether in moments that echoed headlines or ones that spoke individual truths too often drowned out by that other, noisier machine. Maybe that's the case every time the calendar turns over. Probably not.

Rather than attempt to come to a consensus about the best albums or songs from the first six months of the year, we opted to select music that was meaningful to us as individuals, music that washed away all the background noise, songs and albums and performances that made sense to us, whether or not they made sense of the world. Moments like that are blessings, not to be taken for granted. Here are nearly four dozen blessings selected by NPR Music staff and our partners from around the public radio system. Let's count them.

The video for John Moreland's "It Don't Suit Me (Like Before)"

Ryan LaCroix, KOSU



Last month, John Moreland told a fan on Twitter, "I ain't country and I ain't sad." While the former can be infinitely debated and parsed, you can forgive the fan for thinking the Tulsa songwriter might be not the happiest guy. Heck, there's an Instagram account dedicated to cheering him up, complete with images of pugs riding unicorns in space. [I'm serious](#). Moreland's gut-punching lyrics have a way of turning

even the biggest and brawniest of us into a puddle of emotions. And his concerts are always a treat because the crowd actually shuts up and listens. Still, hearing the folk-rocker "It Don't Suit Me (Like Before)" is incredibly refreshing. Its disposition differs from most of his prior material, but it's not a cheery song. It shows a resolute Moreland moving forward, ready to leave the baggage and worries in the past. The accompanying music video follows him around at home and on the road with friends and his wife. You even catch a couple smiles from him in there. While Moreland's last two albums sounded like he was searching for something, this song signals that he's finally found it.