

Songs for the Quarantine #21: Voices Carry, 'Til Tuesday

Good morning, Roll Over Easy, and welcome to the twenty-first Songs for the Quarantine. I'm @suldrew. Every week while we are under shelter-in-place, we'll bring you a song that's perfect for taking your mind off social distancing, that you can listen to while you walk in the park, or work from home, or mask up and take a ride on a new BART train for the first time in a while.

Information Gladly Given But Safety Requires Avoiding Unnecessary Conversation. We've all seen this sign on Muni - and Jeff Tumlin helpfully [tweeted it](#) last week. Of course it means don't disturb the operator. But in the era of Covid, it might have new significance, if a recent [Atlantic article](#) is any indication. When Japan started to reopen after lockdowns, it didn't have any trouble with virus transmission on the subways. Why? I quote, "Japanese commuters have an informal rule to avoid talking loudly on trains, if at all."

This is certainly my experience, from when I lived there - even packed Tokyo Metro cars are as quiet as a 7 AM Caltrain. It might be a bit of hyperbole, even for the Atlantic, but author Derek Thomson claims, and again I quote, "The truth is that if everybody stopped talking for a month or two, the pandemic would probably die off."

So this week, with thanks to Burrito Justice for the suggestion, and in honor of [Aimee Mann's](#) birthday Tuesday, let's listen to [Voices Carry](#) by 'Til Tuesday. Mann's breakout hit referencing what we might charitably call a problematic relationship (unless it was with consent) was all over MTV in 1985, and won the VMA that year for [Best New Artist](#). That moment towards the end of the video, where Mann stands and sings "He said, shut up!" at the top of her lungs in Carnegie Hall, might not be a good example of how to slow the spread of Covid, but it's an unforgettable message to all those who try to shush their partners, especially men in suits with skinny black ties. It's also familiar to anyone who has tried to carry on a conversation in the Transbay Tube on an original, 1970s-era BART car.

Thompson suggests: "Here's one solution: Library rules for America." Having been to the San Francisco Main Library, I'm not sure how well that would stick. Could we really give up back-of-the-bus social hours (miss you, 21-Hayes) and make transbay Showtime into a silent disco? The Bay Area is a gregarious place, and chitchat is hard to give up.

But we would do well to keep it down, because like voices, Covid carries too. For now, keep your mask on, and post those tweets, Tiktoks and Instagram stories with amazing sunset views from your window seat, strictly hush-hush. We'll be able to stand up and sing, in full voice, sooner than we think.