

# Vegan Anthems



Louise Wallis

**A**s a DJ, music is a big part of my life. I frequently find myself day-dreaming about which tracks might go well together. Flicking through my record collection one day last summer, I found a few with a 'vegan' theme, although not enough for a full-blown mix. It got me wondering if there were others out there. So I started searching the internet for 'vegan and vegetarian songs' and set up a discussion thread on the Vegan Society's Facebook page.

Turned out there were more than I'd ever imagined, so many that I was able to cherry-pick my favourites to make a mix. They had to have musical merit: that was my starting point. And, of course, they had to reflect my own personal bias: e.g. no thrash metal. In the end I selected 17 tracks (yes that's right 17!) for my 'Vegan Anthems' DJ mix. All have a 'vegan' message or theme, although this doesn't necessarily mean that the artist is vegan. Here I've picked my Top 5:

## 1. Animal Kingdom by Prince

The no 1 spot has to go to Prince for Animal Kingdom, his song about veganism. I didn't know it existed until I started my quest, but it turns out this hidden gem was released in 1998 with the album 'Crystal Ball'. Here's a sample of the lyrics:

"No member of the animal kingdom nurses past maturity  
No member of the animal kingdom ever did a thing to me  
It's why I don't eat red meat or white fish  
Don't give me no funky blue cheese  
We're all members of the animal kingdom  
Leave your brothers and sisters in the seas"

Prince also gave fans the lowdown on wool on the sleeve notes of his 1999 album 'Rave Un2 the Joy Fantastic'. Describing why the jacket he wore on one of the album photos was faux, he wrote: "If this jacket were real wool, it would have taken 7 lambs whose lives would have begun like this ... Within weeks of their birth, their ears would have been hole-punched, their tails chopped off and the males would have been castrated while fully conscious.

Xtremely high rates of mortality r considered normal: 20 2 40% of lambs die b4 the age of 8 weeks: 8 million mature sheep die every year from disease, xposure or neglect."

## 2. Pigs ... In there? by Robert Wyatt

An unforgettable track, which has haunted me since I first heard it on a compilation album. For those who don't know Robert, he's a hugely influential solo artist (formerly of the band Soft Machine) who has inspired bands like Tears for Fears and collaborated with many musicians including Bjork and Dave Gilmour. Wyatt also wrote the soundtrack to The Animals Film, a landmark documentary about animal exploitation, which Channel 4 broadcast in its first week. Sunday Times film critic Alan Brien wrote at the time: "I do not know when I have come out of a screening so moved by the power of the cinema as a medium to transform the entire sensibility of an audience". Wyatt's spooky score contributed much to the film's intensity.

In 'Pigs', Wyatt describes his shock on being told one hot summer day that an incongruous concrete building in the middle of the beautiful Wiltshire countryside contained pigs. "Pigs?" he sings incredulously, "huddled up in there? In the dark, in there? On a day like this, living in there?"

## 3. Meat is Murder by The Smiths

The most iconic 'vegan anthem' of them all, 'Meat is Murder' was the title track from The Smiths second album - their sole number 1 album in the UK charts during the band's lifetime. "This beautiful creature must die, a death for no reason, and death for no reason is murder" sings Morrissey, over the sounds of cows crying and sinister industrial noises. It's hard for us to appreciate just how ground-breaking – and shocking - this was at the time – and from a band at the very height of their fame! Countless people have since cited this track as their main motivation for becoming vegetarian or vegan. Morrissey of course is well known for his vegetarian views, but less well known is the fact that guitarist Johnny Marr says that he has been vegan since 1985 (something he says that he told the Guardian in 2009).

#### 4. Supernature by Cerrone

Bet you didn't see this one coming! This 70s dancefloor classic has a sci-fi theme: about the rebellion of mutant creatures — created by scientists to end starvation among mankind — against the humans. I'd been so enthralled by the beat I'd never noticed the lyrics until my partner (and fellow DJ) Frank Frenzy drew my attention to them:

"Once upon a time  
Science opened up the door  
We would feed the hungry fields  
Till they couldn't eat no more

But the potions that we made  
Touched the creatures down below  
And they grow up in a way  
That we'd never seen before"

Will humankind get its comeuppance it asks?  
Way ahead of its time, I reckon.

#### 5. Be Healthy by Dead Prez

And last, but not least, a more contemporary track from 2000 by Dead Prez - an American underground political hip hop duo stic.man and M-1, who have long extolled the virtues of a vegan diet:

"I don't eat no meat, no dairy, no sweets  
only ripe vegetables, fresh fruit and whole wheat  
I'm from the old school, my household smell like soul food, bro  
curried falafel, barbecued tofu"

I was genuinely amazed how many "Vegan Anthems" I managed to find, and by the quality of the songs. I'm still finding more - for example I recently found out that Ian Dury had recorded not one but two 'vegan' anthems: 'D'Orine the cow' and 'Poor Joey' (about a caged budgie). My only regret was not finding more current tracks - but this may be due to the sterile times we live in? I've noticed several music journalists bemoaning the lack of decent protest songs recently, so maybe our time has come ....

Louise DJs under the name Luminous and was voted one of the world's 'Top 100 Female DJs'.  
She's also sings with the band Luminous Frenzy

You can listen to her Vegan Anthems mix here: [www.soundcloud.com/djluminous/vegan-anthems](http://www.soundcloud.com/djluminous/vegan-anthems)



Johnny Marr says that he has been vegan since 1985  
photo: Karen Robinson