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by Stephen Thomas Erlewine

Crafted to fit the angst-ridden atmosphere of the cult teen-drama television show, the soundtrack to *My So Called Life* is a winning collection of mainstream alternative rock (Buffalo Tom, Juliana Hatfield) that also touches on more underground acts like Sebadoh and Archers of Loaf. Like most various-artists collections, the disc is a bit inconsistent, yet the majority of the album is quite enjoyable.

blue highlight denotes track pick

My So Called Life by Sean Patrick McGraw

April 26, 2011 9 Songs, 30 minutes © 2011 Little Engine Records

List of My So-Called Life music

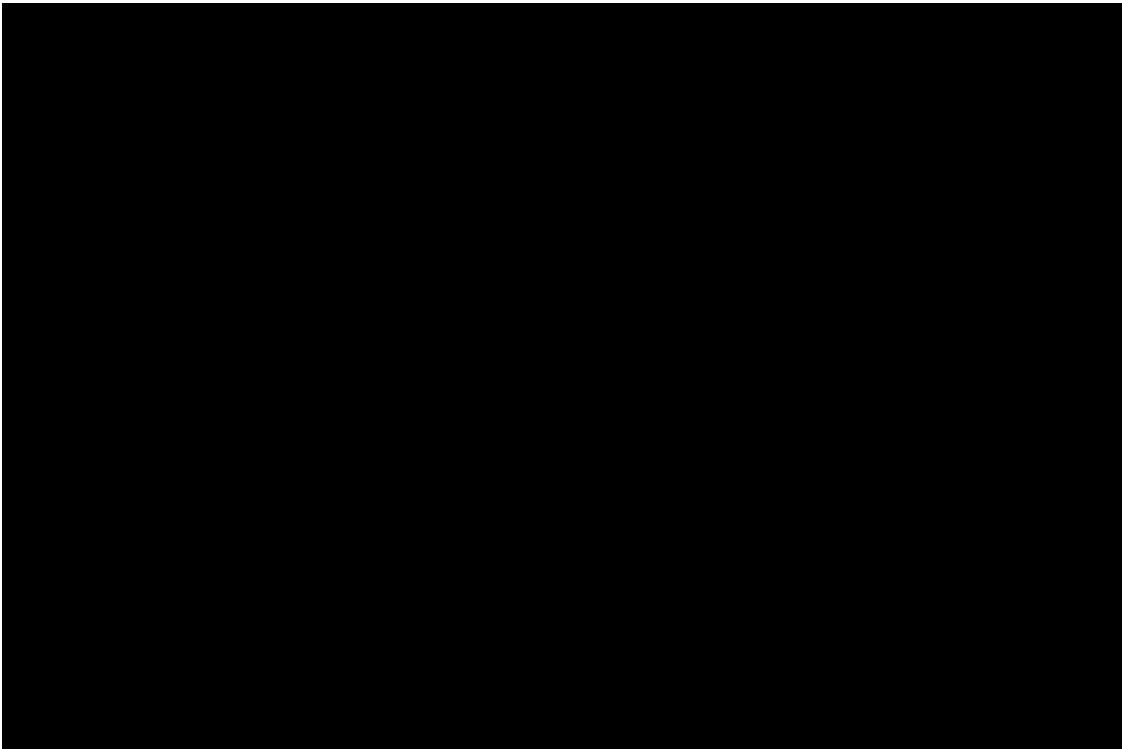
There are many songs and pieces of music used in *My So-Called Life*. Some are featured as soundtrack, some are part of the story (such as heard on a radio) and some are sung by the characters themselves. For the soundtrack recording see *My So-Called Life (Music from the Television Series)*.

This list contains the episode number, the name of the song and (where possible) the scene in which it can be heard.

All episodes - Theme Music by W.G. Snuffy Walden

1.1 "Everybody" by Animalbag (band at Tino's party) 1.1 "I Touch Myself" by the Divinyls (on the TV Jordan watches) 1.1 "Everybody Hurts" by R.E.M. (Angela returns from the rave) 1.2 "Cruel Swing" by Jawbox (in Jordan's Car) 1.3 "Dreams" by the Cranberries (in Angela's room) 1.4 "Althea" by the Grateful Dead (Graham repairs the roof) 1.4 "Palomine" by Bettie Serveert (In Angela's bedroom) 1.5 "Return to Innocence" by Enigma (the Mother-Daughter Fashion Show) 1.6 "What About Your Friends?" by TLC (just before Vic shows up) 1.7 "Red" by W.G. Snuffy Walden/Winnie Holzman (Jordan's song) 1.7 "Sodajerker" by Buffalo Tom (Sharon and Kyle in the hall) 1.9 "Johnny Angel" by Shelley Fabares (in the gym) 1.9 "Blue Moon" by Elvis Presley (with Nicky, and hummed by Rickie) 1.10 "Fall Down" by Toad the Wet Sprocket (parking lot scene) 1.10 "Spin the Bottle" by Juliana Hatfield Three (before the party) 1.10 "Down About It" by the Lemonheads (at the party) 1.10 "Dame With a Rod" by Juliana Hatfield Three (at the party) 1.10 "Drop A Bomb" performed by Madder Rose (at the party as Rayanne exits the bathroom) 1.11 "South Carolina" by Archers of Loaf (Jordan's Car radio) 1.11 "Dawn Can't Decide" by the Lemonheads (at the school dance World Happiness Dance) 1.11 "Dropout" by Urge Overkill (at the dance) 1.11 "Pressure" by Sunscreen (at the dance) 1.11 "What is Love?" by Haddaway (Rickie and Delia's dance) 1.11 "Try" by Billy Pilgrim (last song at the dance) 1.12 "Soda Jerk" by Buffalo Tom (performed live) 1.12 "Late at Night" by Buffalo Tom (performed live and closing scene) 1.12 "Fountain and Fairfax" by Afghan Wigs (after Patty discovers the whiskey glass and at the Vertigo Club) 1.14 "I Wanna Be Sedated" by the Ramones (sung by the Frozen Embryos) 1.14 "Sesame Street Theme Song" (sung by Rayanne) 1.15 "Silent Night" (played by Angel on her guitar and by Angela on the piano) 1.15 "O Holy Night" (background choral track) 1.15 "Away in a Manger" (background choral track) 1.15 "Make It Home" by Juliana Hatfield (sung by J.H. as the Angel) 1.15 "I Feel Like Going Home" (sung by the Inner Voices church) 1.17 "Blister in the Sun" - Violent Femmes (Angela's bedroom dance) 1.17 "Genetic" - Sonic Youth (Rayanne and Jordan at "Louie's") 1.18 "The Book Song" - Frente! (in Angela's bedroom) 1.18 "I Alone" - Live (in Patty and Graham's bedroom) "Come See Me Tonight" by Daniel Johnston "Petty Core" by Further

The My So-Called Life Soundtrack Is the Music Equivalent of the Coziest Flannel



We've been looking back all week at the hugely influential 1994–95 network-television season, which found new shows *Friends* and *ER* hobnobbing on the same schedule with *Seinfeld*, *The Simpsons*, and *The X-Files*. We've counted down the season's 100 best episodes, presented an oral history of the first season of *Party of Five*, tested your *Friends* knowledge with an SAT-style exam, and so much more. But right now we only care about *My So-Called Life*, and it's time to listen to its awesome soundtrack again, with your host, *Vulture* columnist Dave Holmes.

In September 1994, Atlantic Records released the soundtrack to ABC's new teen drama *My So-Called Life*. What do these 11 songs tell us about the pop-culture landscape of 1994, about adolescence, about the emotional world of this show (which we here at *Vulture* obviously agree is pretty much perfect)? Let's put on our coziest flannel and dive in.

1. "Make It Home," Juliana Hatfield The *My So-Called Life* soundtrack was released on the day the show premiered, which is odd because its leadoff track didn't appear in the show until episode 15. The producers, writers, and music supervisors of MSCL, it seems, were playing a long game. They certainly set a mood with this collection of songs, whether they knew they'd eventually use them in the show or not. Each song on this soundtrack sounds like autumn, feels like a cozy sweater and a backpack full of fresh textbooks, pounds with the ache of unrequited love as the days get colder and the nights get longer. Right around this time each year, I pull out my Blake Babies and Lemonheads CDs for this very reason. This one was sung on the show by Juliana Hatfield herself, playing a homeless girl who may or may not have been an angel in the show's one implausible moment that nevertheless manages to slay me every time.
2. "Soda Jerk," Buffalo Tom Buffalo Tom are another perfect example of autumncore, and to see them — live, even! — on a network television show was a genuine thrill. In the post-Nirvana, early-alternative-radio days of the mid-'90s, the idea of BT becoming an important band was completely plausible, and though I'd have welcomed it, it would have been bittersweet; I'd already lost Toad the Wet Sprocket to the masses. It never happened the way it should have for them, but their music is used beautifully here: This song plays while Sharon and Kyle smooch out by the lockers, and we hear "Late at Night" both at the club while Jordan ignores Angela and in the high-school hallway when he finally takes her hand for the whole school to see. It is beautiful, even if "Larry" from their previous album "Let Me Come Over" would have been a better choice.
3. "Genetic," Sonic Youth From episode 17, in a scene from Louie's with Rayanne, Rickie, and Jordan. Rayanne is in full relapse mode here, just about to hook up with Jordan in the back of his car while Brian Krakow videotapes it. (Another wonderful element of this show is that we know every character's first and last name; this whole social circle feels so lived-in.) I wonder about Rayanne Graff, probably more than is healthy for a person my age, and this is what I think: I think Rayanne manages a bar in Portland, Oregon, and has a signature cocktail and a sleeve tattoo. She still drinks, though every year or so she means to stop, she is a few credits short of an associate's degree in business, she is not connected via Facebook with Angela — who only shares pictures with friends and family — but she's going to send that request one of these days.
4. "Petty Core," Further This song never made it into the show, so I'm just going to keep speculating: I think Sharon has a mommy-blog. I think Danielle is on the Mainstage at Second City. I think Brian goes to Burning Man. I think Rickie writes code and is very into bear culture. I think Patty and Graham are pretty much right where we left them. I think nobody's heard from Jordan in a long time. I think Tino will be here any minute. I have no idea where Angela ended up.
5. "Drop a Bomb," Madder Rose This one wasn't featured on the show either. Madder Rose was one of those bands whose names I heard here and there, who would have been right up my alley but I never got into them because there were more such bands in the '90s than I could keep up with. Too many bands with icy guitars and clear-voiced female lead singers singing brainy lyrics. Velocity Girl. Lush. Suddenly Tammy. Letters To Cleo. Echobelly. that dog. More that I've probably forgotten. I will repeat: In 1994, too many bands were right up my alley. My advice to you is that if you are feeling this way about the music of 2014, hold on to the experience however you can.

6. "Fountain and Fairfax," Afghan Whigs It's faintly audible in a Vertigo Club scene in the epic and music-stuffed episode 12. You know, for being 17 or under in a Pittsburgh suburb, these kids sure got into trouble in a lot of hip places. But the show never veered into Larry Clark territory; one always got the sense that the adults were at least present. There was nothing Patty, Graham (hell, even Amber) couldn't at least try to fix, and if nothing else, these kids' hearts were pure. An Afghan Whigs song on the soundtrack is as close to hopelessness as we got (and I say that as a Whigs fan).

7. "South Carolina," Archers of Loaf A snippet of this song plays from Jordan Catalano's car in episode 11, at the height of Jordan's mixed signals toward Angela. Has anyone ever talked about how much Jordan looks like Graham? Is this a thing that we have all silently acknowledged? Why didn't Tom Irwin go on to greater success? Graham could cook me a meal any day, is what I'm saying here.

8. "Dawn Can't Decide," the Lemonheads From episode 10, maybe my favorite of the whole series, nailing as it does the frustration and exhilaration of the first time we lose our hearts. It's always with someone who doesn't or can't feel the same way, and so it is here: Delia likes Brian who likes Angela who likes Jordan, who's too checked-out to know who he likes, and Delia's about to like Rickie, who likes Cory who likes Rayanne, who hates herself. Cory puts it best: "It's weird when you have a picture of how something's gonna be, and it ends up being totally different." Rickie agrees somberly: "Yeah. It is weird." What it is is torture, a torture you don't even have the language or the wisdom to describe, and you miss it when it ends. This song expresses none of those sentiments, but the idea that a gymnasium full of teenagers would dance to it provides a thrill of its own.

9. "The Book Song," Frente! From the very last episode, narrated by poor Danielle herself, indicating the richness that lay ahead for this show if they'd just kept it going. But alas, the Mark Harmon crime drama *Charlie Grace* needed a slot, so that was that. And maybe it's for the best. This show will remain forever young (like Jared Leto's face), and it will never grow to disappoint us (like Jared Leto's awards-show speeches).

10. "Come See Me Tonight," Daniel Johnston The last of the songs we never heard in any episode. Daniel Johnston is a musician and artist who has struggled with mental illness through his whole adult life, and I hope this wasn't the producers signaling a turn for Jordan Catalano's character in subsequent seasons, but I fear it might have been. I take comfort in knowing that I lived during a time when placing a bedroom recording from a schizophrenic indie-rocker onto the soundtrack for a television teen drama was a thing ABC and Atlantic Records would do. Let's keep that spirit alive and listen to this kid's YouTube cover. Is he the Jordan in his world, do you figure? Or the Brian? Or the Rickie?

11. "Theme From My So-Called Life" The other day, I rated this as the best theme song of all the new shows of the epic 1994-95 television season, and a commenter disagreed, saying that since "I'll Be There for You" and "Closer to Free" still get stuck in our heads, they are superior. Okay, I hear that argument, but if ear-worminess were the sole measure of quality, Eiffel 65's "Blue (Da Ba Dee)" would be mutually agreed upon as the greatest song of all time. (Sorry about the rest of your day, everyone.) I think there's more to it than that. I think music can set a tone, and I think that's what the MSCL theme does. It conveys anticipation, growth, aggression, confusion. If nothing else, it lets you know you're about to spend 44 minutes watching something great. Which, on this sad day, seems like a good thing to do. It's streaming on Hulu. For free. Go. Now. Go.

The My So-Called Life Soundtrack Is the Best