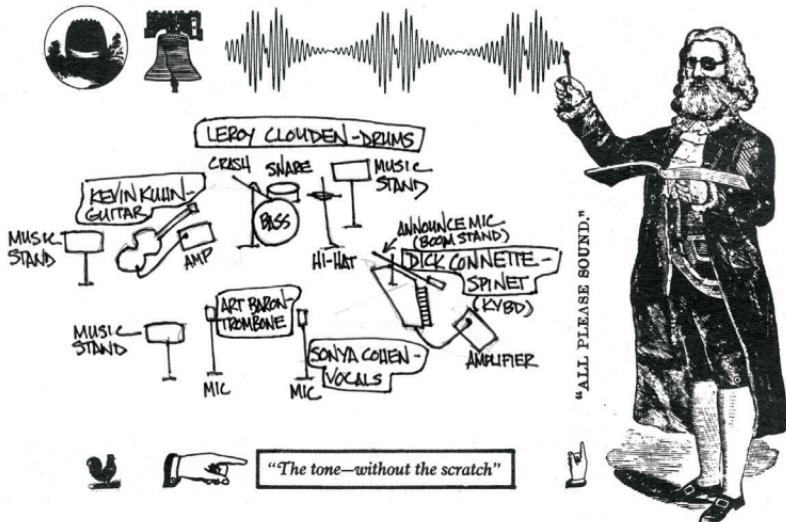


*Friends, if you've got the proper amount of determination,
you can overcome any kind of a physical handicap.
Why, I once knew a man that didn't have a tooth in his head
and yet that man learned to play a bass drum
better than anybody I ever listened to.*



In vaudeville, burlesque, and minstrel show practice, the olio was a musical interlude presented between dramatic acts, a specialty number performed downstage, while upstage, behind a curtain, the set was changed for the main production.

The 1949 movie "Mighty Joe Young" is basically a "King Kong" knock-off, but has a couple of striking aspects. One was the theme song, Stephen Foster's "Beautiful Dreamer," first sung as a lullaby to baby gorilla Joe, and which continues to have a calming effect when he grows gargantuan. The other was a climactic scene featuring the heroine in an evening dress at some fancy concert hall playing a florid arrangement of "Beautiful Dreamer" on a slowly revolving grand piano. Gradually piano and woman ascend on a platform and it is revealed that the works are supported by none other than Mighty Joe Young, himself. Imagine the size of the footprint that left on the unconscious mind of the young and impressionable.



A man (unfortunately? providentially??) named Russell H. Conwell (1843 - 1925) wrote a speech called "Acres of Diamonds" – the basic idea was that you didn't have to look far to find your fortune – there were acres of diamonds buried in your back yard. As one of the country's most popular platform orators, he delivered the lecture more than 6,000 times, and, in the time-honored American tradition of inspirational speakers, got rich off of telling others how to make a buck.

There's a picture taken from the inside, looking out the door of Muddy Waters' cabin on Stovall's Plantation in Clarksdale, Mississippi – dark interior, bright sunlit exterior, with the farm's furrowed fields just outside stretching far and wide to the horizon. This image of a life so circumscribed is startling – it's no wonder that Waters moved north to Chicago to take up another line of work.



On May 19, 1845 Sir John Franklin commanded a British Royal Navy expedition to find the Northwest Passage, whose existence had been firmly established by nearly three centuries of wishful thinking. A few months later, the two ships, fitly named (as it turned out) "Erebus" and "Terror," crossed paths with a couple of whaling vessels, and were never heard from again. Over the next 15 years several dozen expeditions were launched to find the missing Franklin. His wife, Lady Jane Franklin, refused to give up hope, and funded four of them herself. Finally, in 1859, a note, written by the Captain of the "Erebus" and stating that Franklin had perished in 1847, was found in a cairn on Canada's King William Island. The local Inuit were questioned, and reported that years ago they had seen a shipwreck and that the crew "fell down and died as they walked along."

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