

Main Theme – (From *Star Wars: A New Hope*) – John Williams

On September 29th 1977, Cassius “Muhammad Ali” Clay entered the Ring for his fight with Ernie Shavers. The movie *Star Wars: A New Hope* had just been released and concomitantly the birth of a franchise that would span generations and become a metaphor for the fights we face internally, externally, and collectively was born, with a roar. Utilizing the energy surrounding the epic, Ali took a page out of wrestler Gorgeous George’s playbook and opted for elaborate showmanship as he entered the fight. While George was credited with saving wrestling, Ali is now credited with the popularization of entrance ring music. While many athletes across the sports universe have opted for entrance music both before and after Ali’s ’77 entrance, the ripple effect of Ali’s entrance turned the spotlight on the craft.

In boxing, the production of the entrance has become an art form and is as important as the fight itself. Whether it is to inspire the spectators, uplift the energy, motivate the fighter, or to play mind games with the opponent, how a boxer enters the ring is a significant ritual.

We start our playlist here, as we start our exhibition.

Upon first entry, after you are greeted by Vito Acconci hyping himself up for a fight, you are met by Carlos Rolon’s *50 Grand Robe*. Like *Entering the Ring music* – the robe is a significant part of the ordeal.

Then you hit a wall. The wall holds a group of works curated together to reflect upon the theme of the *reality* of boxing and the boxer’s journey and the shadowy history the sport evokes.



From Left to Right: David Rathman – *Untitled*, Platon – *Muhammad Ali*, Kathy Sherman Suder – *Alone*, Kathy Sherman – *Considering his Options*, David Seltzer – *God*, Peter Blake – *Untitled (Boxer #2)*, Martin Kippenberger -*Ohne Titel (Untitled)*(From the series *Hand Painted Pictures*) Photo By Gary Mamay

Here, photographed at the stage in his life when his body was riddled with Parkinson's, Muhammad Ali is captured in black and white, resting his face in his hands. Ali will appear in two more incarnations within the exhibition, as an invisible, non-depicted boxer, leaving behind only his good sportsmanlike conduct and his words.

An icon and inspiration to many, in many different dimensions, Ali is one of the most recognizable names in boxing.

In the curation of this playlist, he is a quiet force throughout.

[Mission Impossible – Main Theme – Danny Elfman](#)

“The fight begins before you get in the ring, before the first punch. My music choices prepare me mentally – inspiring me – while sending a message to my opponents.” – Lennox Lewis.

[Eye of the Tiger – Survivor](#)

Used for many boxing entrances, and popularized by the film franchise *Rocky*, *Eye of the Tiger* has become synonymous with boxing. The song was a favorite of former Philippine Senator, Manny Pacquiao. Pacquiao, like Lewis and other fighters, chose different songs for each fight.

[Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now – McFadden & Whitehead](#)

Unlike Pacquiao and Lewis, David Haye exemplifies the power of the repetitious use of one song. The McFadden & Whitehead song is well associated with the boxer. The song is also associated with another boxer and a particular fight.

In 1988, Larry Holmes, former sparring partner of Muhammad Ali, was set to fight Mike Tyson. Holmes took his time getting to the ring, making Tyson wait. Holmes's antics agitated the fury machine so badly that Tyson ended up punching a hole in the wall of his locker room. When he finally began his walk to the ring, Holmes took a different route than scripted and pulled up one of his old entrance song favorites, “Ain't No Stopping Us Now.”

[The Sound of Silence – Disturbed](#)

Everything in Holmes's entrance seemed designed to intimidate and infuriate his opponent. Tyson, 21 at the time, was fueled by his desire to fulfill a promise of revenge on behalf of his idol Muhammad Ali, whom Holmes had defeated. With Ali in attendance, Tyson entered the ring without any performative gestures. While he may have been stripped due to Holmes's taking his time for showmanship, entering the ring in silence and with his robe off, gloves ready, Tyson unleashed pure fury upon Holmes. In a fourth-round knockout and upset win, Tyson became one of five fighters to ever defeat Holmes and the only fighter to stop Holmes with a knockout, thus sending him home singing a different tune. The fight is marked as the beginning of Tyson's furious boxing career ascent.

[This is it – Kenny Loggins](#)

Unlike his '88 disturbed-silence fight with Holmes, his '88 fight with Michael Spinks displayed Tyson's mental manipulation and intimidation tactics. Spinks walked into the ring to Kenny Loggins's *This is it!* Tyson arrived to the ring beneath a frenzied and, in the announcer's own words, "electrified crowd" thundering around him. Above the crowd noise, the sounds of heavy metal chains clanking and the buzzing drone of John Balance and Peter Christopherson's experimental music rained down.

[What's My Name – DMX](#)

The entrance rattled Spinks.

While the entire aura of pent-up fury waiting to explode into the ring could be the culprit, one can take a rabbit hole dive into the shadowy history of boxing and see a deeper metaphor. The mental imagery conjured by the sounds and chains is that of bondage, and concomitantly the potential freedom waiting for the victor who breaks those chains. The shadowy history of boxing reaches back toward the dawn of civilization, with a bloody root in the human stain of slavery. It is a reminder that at one time boxers, especially at the hands of slave owners, were forced to fight until death. The victor left the ring with more than a title and adulations, he left with his life. The other boxer did not.

The matchup of songs was a stark contrast and a reminder that Tyson is a master of intimidation. In a chat with rapper Eminem on his podcast, Tyson admitted that the intimidation of the ring walk was an orgasmic experience for him. "I'm not nervous, I'm scared. Because I'm a scary guy. I've been bullied and picked on all my life. I've been abused all my life. People did anything they wanted to me, so I have a natural fear of not being safe. That's just who I am naturally, its in my life, its who I am."

Close friends with other rappers, Tyson used many different hard hitting rap songs as his entrance music. 2Pac wrote and dedicated the song "Road to Glory," to Tyson which Tyson used.

Tyson would also use "What's My Name," as an entrance song for another fight. The Ferocious bark of DMX's words and beats a surefire way to make an entrance.

[Mike Tyson – D-ROZE](#)

Rapper D-Roze takes a stab at lyrical intimidation with Tyson as his inspiration. The track begins with a clip of Tyson speaking after a fight. Tyson's fury and ferocity is summed up in the clip. He will take your heart, eat your children, and his "style is impetuous. [His] defense impregnable."

Perhaps inspired by the rhythmic delivery of Tyson's choice words, D-Roze goes on to write a hype song using boxing as a metaphor. "Step into" D-Roze, and you will potentially face a "Tyson on the mic."

With their ability to "hit" their opponents with punchlines, rappers are the musical boxers of the world.

[Ain't No Half-Steppin' – Big Daddy Kane](#)

“Step into me? Yo that’s the wrong move.”

Kane’s lyrics are a prime example of lyrical takedown wizardry. Idolized by Eminem for his compound syllabic rhyme schemes, Kane is an example of the rap game before its transition into the hard gangsta rap of the 90’s.

When rap began to hit mainstream, and specifically white suburbia, record labels began to push the thug narratives and began to exploit rappers heavily. Other narratives like the video vixen and drug kings were hoisted into the center ring. The promise of a successful rap career, like a successful boxing career, often meant a way out of poverty, a way off the streets, a promise of generational wealth.

[Song For Sonny Liston – Mark Knopfler](#)

“Sonny Liston made me look like a boy scout” – Mike Tyson.
With ties to the mob, Liston was a boxer many feared to face, including Ali.

In the exhibition, Paul Davis’s 1965 print Sonny Liston resides in a corner of The Church. This portrait was commissioned by Sports Illustrated and used on the cover of their May 24, 1965 issue. It was created to celebrate the match between Liston and Ali. The original idea for the cover photograph was to represent Ali punching through the image. Ali found that action disrespectful, and he was instead posed in front of it after winning the match.



[Jack Dempsey – Scythian](#)

Another boxer mentioned in the D-Roze Mike Tyson clip. Dempsey competed between 1914 and 1927. The Irish-American boxer was so aggressive in his style of fighting that the boxing commission enacted a rule that boxers had to retreat to their neutral corners and give the knocked down opponents a chance to get up. Out of 80 fights, Dempsey knocked out 49 men, about half of them within the first round and after only 14 seconds.

[Thunderstruck – AC/DC](#)

Another example of a song becoming synonymous with a boxer and part of the canon in the boxing culture, Thunderstruck was THE song of boxer Arturo “Thunder” Gatti. Psychologically, the repetition of the song with Gatti’s style of fighting ensured that when a boxing fan heard it, they knew they were about to witness an intense match.

Manny Pacquiao among other boxers also used this song.

[Greig: Peer Gynt, Op.23, Act 4: No 13, Prelude. Moring Mood](#)

On the morning of November 9, 1996, two boxers woke for a highly anticipated match. The fight, billed as *Finally*, was the first fight between Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield. The matchup had been put into the works in 1991, but due to an injury and Tyson's subsequent rape conviction and 6-year prison sentence the fight was delayed until '96.

Tyson was favored to win 25 to 1.

[Philippians 4:13 \(Stand\) – Stephen Hurd, Bishop George Searight](#)

From the New Testament, 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Holyfield entered the ring in a purple robe with the Scripture stitched on his lapel.

While this song choice is symbolic of Holyfield's robes specifically, it is included to highlight the importance of the Boxing Robe and its role in the ritual of the match.

In exhibition: Calos Rolón 50 GRAND Robe, 2017

[Victory – Brenda Waters](#)

While this Victory is not the Victory Holyfield had penned for him, Holyfield was notorious for using of Gospel music as well as singing along with it as part of his entrance. Holyfield, like many other boxers, leaned on his faith throughout his career.

[Be Magnified – Lynn DeShazo](#)

Before *Finally*, Holyfield started to crumble. The underdog status, the weight of the heavy weight title and potential third win putting him on the record books alongside Ali, and Tyson's own fiery winning streak had started to get inside Holyfield's head. He spoke to his wife about his misgivings about the match. She suggested he listen to "Be Magnified" and sent along scriptures. Holyfield's camp heard the song on repeat for weeks. Originally intending to enter the ring to the gospel song "Mighty Man of War" Holyfield made a last minute decision to his Ring Walk and chose a different tune and tone.

[The Invisible Man – Queen](#)

Holyfield entered the ring in '96 against Tyson with a prayer. Tyson came out of the gate with a vicious attack in the first round, Holyfield defended himself and then went on the offense. For 11 intense rounds, Tyson was unable to significantly hurt Holyfield and spent the rest of the fight on the defense.

After the 11th round the referee called the fight in Holyfield's favor, leading to a major upset victory. Holyfield became the first fighter since Ali to win three heavyweight titles.

Holyfield noted after the fight that while in the ring he was aware of Tyson's realization and awareness that Holyfield did not appear to be intimidated, putting Tyson on psychological defense, and making him think on his feet.

Ralph Ellison's Revenge – the Mons

This song is reference to the novel **The Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison**. The book is narrated by an unidentified black man who remains nameless. Set in the early 20th century, the book examines the intellectual and social concerns of Black America. It opens with the narrator reminiscing about his youth. The first story shared is of the narrator's journey to college. Upon arrival, he and several other classmates are set up to fight one another in battle-royale fashion for a group of drunken men. A blonde woman with a flag on her belly is forced to do a strip tease, the students are forced to watch, and the narrator draws attention to the frenzied fear in the woman's eyes when the men begin to grab at her. For a split second they are equals – both subjected to the white man's pleasures, which include getting drunk off the violence of brother fighting brother and the sexual gratification of objectifying women. Harkening back to the days of fighting to the death, the scene sets the stage for the rest of the novel as it examines social relationships within races and genders.

Fall in Line (feat. Demi Lavato) – Christina Aguilera

“That’s just the way it is
Maybe its never gonna change
but I’ve got a mind to show my strength
and I’ve got a right to speak my mind.
And I’m gonna pay for this.
They’re gonna burn me at the stake
But I’ve got a fire in my veins
I wasn’t made to fall in line.”

Aguilera fans are affectionately known as “Fighters,” due to the popularity of her Stripped Album song entitled [Fighters](#).

It’s Called Respect – Fearless Lion

While the infamous ear biting rematch between Tyson and Holyfield would transpire years later, thus keeping Tyson in a controversial cyclone, after their first fight Tyson took his loss with grace and bowed to Holyfield, saying that he had respect for the fight and the fighter. Holyfield left the fight as the underdog winner, heavyweight champ, and a newlywed, as he and his wife Janice were married weeks before the fight.

This song is sung by children, mostly, and is about the respect we pay to one another, to teachers, and to the basic rules that help everyone get along.

Bayan Ko – Ruben Tagalog, Sylvia La Torre, Mabuhay Singers

The unofficial national anthem for the Philippines. Written in 1928, the music was composed by Constancio de Guzman, words by poet Jose Corazon de Jesus and first sung by artist Atang de la

Rama. It is a call for freedom from oppression directed against invaders and oppressors and helped bring down a dictatorship.

Manny Pacquiao would sometimes enter the ring to traditional Filipino music, and even wrote a song himself in his native tongue called I fight for the Philippine People.



In Exhibition :

In between Paul Davis's portrait Sonny Liston, and Charles Waller's repurposed Victorian wedding gown piece Plié (From the Bridal Suite) is a see through television displaying a digital video loop of a Pacquiao fight. The artist of Caryatid (Pacquiao), Paul Pfeiffer, digitally removed Pacquiao's opponent.

The piece evokes a strong visceral reaction from visitors and is a capture of the loneliness and violence of the sport. It is also a beautiful metaphor for the punches we take that no one else sees, the fights we face alone, and the struggles we can only face on our own.

Hallelujah – Leonard Cohen



IN EXHIBITION: Broken Hallelujah Eric Fischl.

A self-portrait and a symbolic nod toward *The Boxer at Rest*, a Hellenic bronze sculpture in the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme in Rome.

“It’s not a pilgrim who claims to have seen the light
No, it’s a cold and it’s a very broken Hallelujah”

When asked to elaborate on Cohen’s song as inspiration for the piece, Eric described the symbolism of male desire, longing, and loneliness coupled with the incredible and beautiful release in being “broken.” He drew attention to the pieces around him in the portrait, and pointed out that they are all in their “in-process” stages. While the actual pieces are now completed it seems deeply reflective of the artists quest to create and relate to their subjects.

Eric drew his inspiration from:

“Your faith was strong but you needed proof
You saw her bathing on the roof
Her beauty and the moonlight overthrew ya
She tied you to a kitchen chair
She broke your throne
She cut your hair
And from your lips she drew the Hallelujah.”

Coincidentally, Cohen’s *Hallelujah* has been covered countless times, and each time the last verse is typically left out. In a way, does this not mirror the act of purposeful incompleteness as a means to symbolize the attempt to connect and relate? Struggling to comprehend “the baffled King composing Hallelujah?”

La Boxeuse amoureuse – Arthur H (The Boxer in Love)

Lyrics Translated from French:

Watch her dance when she approaches the Ring

The boxer in love

The boxer in love

On his golden gloves, traces of blood

Tears and sweat and blood and blood

She dodges the blows

The Boxer in love

She absorbs everything

The boxer in love

“boom-boom” the uppercuts that hit his face

She never stops dancing, dancing

Falling is nothing since she gets up

A smile on the lips

A smile on the lips

She dodges the blows

The boxer in love

She absorbs everything

The boxer in love

She absorbs everything

The boxer in love

April in Paris – Count Basie

Namesake song of co-founder of The Church, April Gornik, “April in Paris,” shares its name with the title of Eric Fischl’s portrait of her, completed after a trip to Paris. Said portrait is depicted behind Eric’s right shoulder in Broken Hallelujah. To his left, curled up on a bench beside him is a depiction of Fischl’s controversial *Tumbling Woman*.

Like Cohen’s Hallelujah, the song “April in Paris,” has many a rendition. Gornik heard the great Ella Fitzgerald/Count Basie rendition throughout her childhood, and Count Basie was selected here for Basie’s involvement with the boxing world.

Ringin’ from a fight bell

On March 13th, 1999 the boxing world joined those in attendance at Madison Square Garden for a moment of silence as a 10 ring fight bell salute to New York Yankee Joe DiMaggio was offered. This was followed by a rendition of God Save the Queen, and D’Angelo performing the National Anthem.

Joltin’ Joe DiMaggio – Les Brown & His Orchestra

The ’99 fight was between Lennox Lewis and Evander Holyfield. While most observers cited Lewis as the winner, the match was determined as a draw.

No Sunshine – DMX

Entrance song for Hasim Rhaman in his April, 2001 fight with Lennox Lewis.

[Nelson Mandela – Marriane Antonsene](#)

Entrance song for Lennox Lewis for the April 2001 fight.

[Invictus – D-Roze](#)

As part of the pay-per-view special on HBO, an interview with Nelson Mandela was aired before the fight. Mandela spoke about his time as a boxer and the inspiration he drew from fighters like Joe Louis.

Invictus, title of the movie about the South African football team, is Latin for undefeated.

While Rahman managed to knock out Lewis in the April fight for an underdog upset victory, the two fought again later that year and Lewis returned the knockout.

[Invictus by William Ernest Henley, read by Morgan Freeman.](#)

The poem was an inspiration to Nelson Mandela

[Speech to the United Nations Committee Against Apartheid 6/22/90 – Nelson Mandela](#)

One thing to be gained by studying entrance music and the promotion of boxing may be the study of linguistics. While showmanship and intimidation antics can huff the air with false bravados, there is a strong unwavering spirit of speaking your win into existence, claiming victory even before the fight.

In his speech to end Apartheid, Mandela makes it clear that the triumph over Apartheid had already been secured and the rest of it was walking toward that vision. Most of his speeches include visualization. Spoken like a boxer, it envisions victory before even stepping into the ring.

[King Joe \(Joe Louis Blues\) – Paul Robeson](#)

Poet of Native Son, Richard Wright penned a poem in honor of boxer Joe Louis. The poem, sung by Paul Robeson, plays over the Count Basie Orchestra.

Joe Louis is an example of a public figure, in this case a boxer, being more than a spectacle in the public eye. Louis became a symbol, and a heroic projection of the American people.

[Underdog – Alicia Keys](#)

Almost everyone loves a good underdog victory, save the people who bet against them.

I sing a song for the hustlers trading at the bus stop
Single mothers waiting on a check to come
Young teachers, student doctors
Sons on the frontline knowing they don't get to run
This goes out to the underdog
Keep on keeping at what you love
You'll find that someday soon enough
You will rise up, rise up, yeah

Rise – Eddie Vedder

Just a man and his ukelele, echoing the Underdog sentiment.

Such is the way of the world
You can never know
Just where to put all your faith
And how will it grow
Gonna rise up
Burning black holes in dark memories
Gonna rise up
Turning mistakes into gold

Can't Stop – Red Hot Chili Peppers

While front man Anthony Kiedis is a longtime fanatic for UFC, MMA, and favors most things fight, grapple, and brawl, the song “Can’t Stop,” was described by one fan as having a warmth when it is thought of in association to Wladimir Klitschko. The song is the chosen ring walk of the Ukrainian fighter.

Wladimir is one of the two brothers in Sam Taylor Johnson’s Three Minute Round.

Though Ukrainian, and often promoted by American boxing promoters, Wladimir and his brother Vitali were supported by the Russian Boxing Federation. Their wins brought pride to both Russia and the Ukraine, and both fighters were revered here in the United States.

“Can’t stop the spirits when they need you. This life is more than just a read through.”

Hey Brother – Avicii

In a statement about the exhibition Eric Fischl expresses that he believes everyone walking through the door will appreciate all the creative ways artists have found to deal with the monumentality of meaningful living.

Avicii, a Swedish DJ, Producer and musician, shocked the world with his death. As an artist Avicii was a perfectionist who grappled with the quest to create meaningful and impactful work. Though passionate about his work and a lover of performance and connection with fans, the artist despised the spotlight of fame. In 2016 he ended his own life with pieces of broken glass.

“Hey brother, there’s an endless road to rediscover. Hey sister, do you still believe in love I wonder?”

Though Aviici may have lost his boxing match with his declining mental health, his work continues to deeply resonate with its listeners.

[Brothers by Vasily Zhadan](#), is **THE** entrance song for Ukrainian boxer, world champion, and Olympic Gold Medalist Alexander Usyk. Unavailable on Spotify, Zhadan’s song led to Aviici’s song and the endless road to rediscover continued.

[Ночі і дні – Okean Elzy \(translation Nights and Days\)](#)

Written and sung in Ukrainian:

Amongst the thoughts like between the lines
It is somewhere there, who knows.
Who would teach and tell
How to keep what we have.
Nights and days
Left their trace in my eyes.
Tell me
Where this long path will lead us to
This long path.
How much were there of sun and rains,
Of those who waited what will happen to us,
Of those who did not start and who did not dare?
How much will come after us?
Nights and days
Left their trace in my eyes.
Tell me
Where this long path will lead us to
This long path.
Nights and days
Left their trace in my eyes.
Tell me
Where this long path will lead us to
The only path.

Okean Elzy’s lead singer, Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, is a physicist, former statesman and UN ambassador. He joined the Ukrainian Territorial Defense battalion in March of 2022.

[Hells Bells – AC/DC](#)

One of THE most iconic entrances in boxing history belongs to Vitali Klitschko. The boxer’s entrance involved holographic projections of boxing legends along with a holographic tolling bell to go along with the song playing through the arena.

In the words of the Grateful Dead: “God save the child who rings that bell.”

Now a projection himself at The Church in Sam Taylor Johnson's piece, Vitali Klitschko sits side by side with his brother Wladimir. Rather than a three-minute round of fighting, the two sit in peace. Boxers at rest.

As the current Mayor of Kyiv, Vitali is deeply involved in the struggle to push back the Russian invasion of the Ukraine.

[The Best – Tina Turner](#)

Chris Eubank, a British former two-weight world champion boxer, regularly walked out to the song for his match entrances.

[Get Up, Stand Up – Bob Marley](#)

Used in many a ring walk, Marley's "don't give up the fight," has been speaking to the spirit of fighting for your rights, your values, your family, and your freedom for generations.

[Crazy Baldheads – Bob Marley](#)

In Jamaica "baldhead" and "Babylon" are used to refer to the establishment that was put in place during colonization and has been kept alive post colonization. The song calls out the hypocrisy of the hegemonic political system in Jamaica while acting as a call to arms to continue the fight to retain identity.

The song was used by Jamaican British fighter Lennox Lewis for his ring walk music in his fight against Mike Tyson.

[Can't Keep I Down – Stephen Marley](#)

Son of Bob Marley, and welcomed East End visitor, Stephen Marley continues his father's legacy along with his brothers through his music and activism.

"Some would love to sweep your feet off the ground
Ev'ry time you get up they keep pushing you down."

[Here comes the Hotstepper – Ini Kamoze](#)

Often used in Boxing training camps, Here comes the Hotstepper, was the ring walk for British featherweight Champ Prince Naseem Hamed in his April 1998 fight against Wilfredo Vasquez. Though the self-predicted second round knockout did not occur for Hamed, he did walk away with a seventh round TKO victory

[Cellphone's Dead – Beck](#)

"Been a long time since a federal dime made a jukebox sound."
"One by one I'll knock you out."

[We Are the Champions – Queen](#)

“I consider it a challenge before the whole human race and I’ll come through!”

[Seven Nation Army – The White Stripes](#)

Seven Nation Army was ranked #21 in Rolling Stones list of 100 Sports Anthems. Recognized in Stadiums worldwide, the song is both played and chanted by crowds at the onset, during, and after a game or match. It is used in boxing training camps, ring walks, and part of the general activities for the Boxing world as well as other sports arenas.

Most recently, in Tennessee, after the trials and tribulations that the Tennessee Three faced in their expulsion from the House during a protest pertaining to gun violence, a crowd gathered to welcome Brother Jones as he exited his reinstatement hearing. With fists raised the crowd [burst into the iconic chant](#).

[Two Against One – Danger Mouse, Daniell Luppi, Jack White](#)

Like Eminem’s triple persona, Two Against One draws on the metaphor of the artist being in the ring with himself. As artists box against imposter syndrome, self-worth, perfectionism, the struggle to find meaning, and much more, the song (also rather tongue in cheek) references external boxing matches still being relevant but taking a back seat in comparison to the internal fight.



In Exhibition:

Stephen Laub Box

Laub’s “Boxing ring for one,” allows an individual to fight themselves and/or their demons.

[Legacy – Eminem](#)

While song of choice for a number of ring walks belongs to Lose Yourself, Legacy provides a snapshot of an artist who exemplifies the metaphor of the boxer. Eminem is a fighter in several dimensions – this is seen in his lyrics about his life indicating fights with addiction, mental health, poverty, and artistic recognition. Legacy explores the idea of a legacy not only referring to Eminem’s success, and the legacy of musicians before him being sources of inspiration to continue the fight against the battles we face in life, much like the legacies left behind by boxers to the next generation of fighters.

[Lose Yourself – Eminem](#)

Often used in boxing training camps and ring walks, Lose Yourself refers to Eminem’s rap battle experience. The nerves that go into the fight. The importance of the moment you’re in as you are in it. It is a portrait of an artist struggling to escape from poverty and ridicule using his craft as vehicle, to not only escape but smash it to pieces and defeat its hold over him.

[Hip Hop – Dead Prez](#)

The world of hip hop is kin to boxers and the boxing world. Cited as TRUE hip hop by fans, Dead Prez explores the Black Intellect, while still packing the heat and punch of the fighter mentality that is incumbent in the artform.

While the exploitation of the hip hop industry lured many individuals with the promise and idealization of big checks and fancy cars, there were artists, like Dead Prez, who rallied against the idea of selling out to the narrative the media wanted perpetuated and instead focused on sharing history, knowledge, and seeking justice. Their Album [Let’s Get Free](#) contains meditations on the Black struggle in America, the role of healthy lifestyles, the questioning of authority, the art of discipline, and the valuation of mind over body in relationships.

[Protect Yo Neck – Wu Tang Clan](#)

One of the most revered, feared, and beloved names in Hip Hop, Wu Tang references Boxer Joe Frazier while reminding everyone that Wu Tang “Ain’t nothing to fuck with.”

Boxing metaphors abound in the world of hip hop and boxers are frequently used in lyrics as symbols for their particular fighting style. “Smokin’ Joe” Frazier is known as the boxer who silenced Muhammad Ali. With an 85% knock out rate, 32 wins and only 4 losses, Frazier was greatness. An Olympic gold medalist at 20 years old, Frazier later opened a boxing club in Philadelphia which became a major resource for local youth.

“Life doesn’t run away from nobody. Life runs at people.” – Joe Frazier.

[One Mic, One Gun – 21 Savage, Nas](#)

Like boxing, with the trash talking and heavy jabs, rappers often get into rivalries, or “beefs.” Some last indefinitely, others end in tragedy as literal shots get fired and lives are ended. Other times, peace can be made.

Upon putting to rest their beef, 21 Savage and Nas linked up to create One Mic, One Gun, homage to Nas's [One Mic](#) a fiery sermon on the struggles of the street, police brutality and the power Nas held in his weapon of choice to combat it all: the microphone. The Queens native is an active voice against racist policing, a voice of the streets, and a critic of the 'posers' who act like they've "put work in."

[Some People Hate – Jay-Z](#)

Inspired by Ali, Jay-Z once noted in an interview that the difference between Muhammad Ali saying "I'm the greatest," vs a hyped up self-aggrandizing boxer saying "I'm the greatest," is that Ali put the work in and the statement was rooted in the truth of true effort. This is true of both Jay-Z and Nas.

A household name and husband to Queen Bey, Jay-Z was involved in a longtime feud with Nas that ended only recently. Beginning in 1996 the two would box each other with each album release. What started as a punchline here and punchline there would turn into a full-on fisticuff battle as each artist began to create entire disc tracks meant to pummel the other. In 2001 Nas released *Stillmatic* with a track called "Ether" that completely obliterated Jay-Z. Jay-Z, unable to go down without the last word, fired back with "Supa Ugly," a track that sampled one of Nas's own songs. Due to the references made in the song, which were not only offensive to Nas but to many female listeners, many people decided Jay had crossed a line. This included his own mother, Gloria Carter, who ended up getting involved. While Jay-Z did apologize on air to his mother and female fans, he still did not let up and took another shot at Nas, to which Nas replied, maintaining the feud. Things settled down and the two went to their respective corners and rested.

In October of 2005 Jay-Z surprised a sold-out crowd on his "I Declare War" tour by formally acknowledging the squashed beef by bringing Nas out onstage and performing alongside him. As recently as this year, Jay-Z celebrated his once longtime nemesis by creating an homage 25-track playlist on Tidal.

[Mama Said Knock you Out – LL Cool J](#)

Long Island native LL Cool J's hit is one of the most popular training camp boxing songs and many boxers have chosen to utilize it as their ring walk song. Allegedly, when attending an award ceremony with his mother, LL's mom turned to him and said "You could knock all of them out!" in reference to his "competitors." Thus, was born the inspiration for one of the most iconic and recognizable songs in hip hop.

[Fight the Power – Public Enemy](#)

Released in 1991 and featured in the Spike Lee joint *Do the Right Thing*, Fight the Power burst onto the scene with an incendiary track that was a sonic protest. The song opens with a quote from a Chicago based lawyer and activist Thomas "TNT" Todd.



In Exhibition:

Fight the Power by Deborah Roberts.

Roberts, inspired by high fashion magazines and Renaissance paintings, and also aware of the lack of representation or marginalized representation of people of color, especially women, causes us to question our standards of what is beautiful, and to “fight the powers that be” that tell us what is and is not beautiful.

We choose.

[BREAK MY SOUL – Beyonce](#)

One of the most influential black women in America, Beyonce released Renaissance in July of 2022. The seventh studio album was conceived and recorded during the pandemic, and reflects the turbulence, struggle, and fight the world underwent as well as the BIPOC community.

About self empowerment, Break My Soul is an excellent “ring walk” for everyday people and the matches they face daily.

[If I Were a Boy – Beyonce](#)

[Sexx Laws – Beck](#)

Both songs are heavyweight champs boxing against the double standard of perceived gender roles of the binary persuasion. More specifically, they box against the idea of toxic masculinity and how often the aloof “don’t care who I hurt,” masculine machismo is celebrated, welcomed, and normalized while others pay the price.

In Beyonce’s song, the double standard is put on display and the listener is forced to confront it. Beck’s song is a jubilant celebration of the defiance of the sex laws that govern us day today.

Together it's a one-two punch.

Let's Get Ready to Rumble! – Zantro Shout – Deloris & the Sisters & The Ronelles (from Sister Act)

“Let's get ready to rumble,” is the most iconic phrase and sound associated with boxing. It is also highlighted in *If I Wasn't Saved*, by Derrick Adams – IN EXHIBITION. The acrylic and fabric collage symbolically shows the fight of the BIPOC community, as they gather in choral robes and boxing gloves.



A BEAUTIFUL NOISE – Alicia Keys & Brandi Carlile

“I have a voice
Started out as a whisper, turned into a scream
Made a beautiful noise
Shoulder to shoulder, marching in the street
When you're all alone, it's a quiet breeze
But when you band together, it's a choir
Of thunder and rain, now we have a choice
cause I have a voice”

Another one-two punch. This song choice is to highlight Adams's *If I Wasn't Saved* and is in conversation with Ben Harpers [Amen Omen](#), from which the lyric “Started as a whisper and turned into a scream” is derived.

Highwomen – The Highwomen

The most resilient undefeated champion boxer of all time is women. For centuries women have been persecuted, beaten, raped, and have taken punch after punch after punch. Every culture is affected from the beating women have taken throughout history.

And still...

“We’ll keep coming back, again and again, and again.”

Irrelevant – P!nk

“Girls just want to have rights, so why do we have to fight?”

Written and released shortly after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade and the tension in America governing women’s rights put boxing gloves on just about everyone with a pair of ovaries.

My Body, My Choice – Naïka

The fight song, tigress roar, of women’s body sovereignty. While the phrase “My body, my choice,” is used predominately in pro-choice campaigns, the lyrics speak to more than that. Body Sovereignty means that a woman can choose what to do with her body, how to dress the body, and what spaces to occupy with it. Pro-Life women and Pro-Choice women can enjoy a knockout punch delivered to anyone who puts their hands upon a woman without her permission.

Wild Hearts Can’t Be Broken – P!nk

“I fight because I have to
I fight for us to know the truth
There’s not enough rope to tie me down
There’s not enough tape to shut this mouth”

Another timely song, *Wild Hearts Can’t Be Broken* was released during a time of great unrest for women. It was inspired by the 19th century suffragette movement and was used in the 2015 film *Suffragette*.

Baraye – Shervin Hajipour (Translation: For...)

The exhibition explores the question “What is worth fighting For?”

Lyrics Translation:

For dancing in the streets
For the fear when kissing
For my sister, your sister, our sisters
For changing rotten brains
For Shame of money-lacking
For yearning of just normal life
For Garbage boy and his dreams
For this planned economics
For this polluted air
For valiasr and its worn-out trees
For Piruz and his possible extinction
For dogs, innocent but banned

For tears with no end
For this moment will never happen again
For smiling faces
For students, for future
For this forced heaven
For the national elite imprisoned
For Afghan Children
For all this “for”s with no repeat
For all this empty chants
For houses, collapsing like card ones
For the feel of peace
For the sun after long nights
For pills of nerves and insomnia
For men, Homeland, development
For girls wishing to be boys
FOR WOMEN, LIFE, FREEDOM
For freedom
For Freedom
For Freedom

[Broken Horses – Brandi Carlile](#)

Like Joe Louis, who became a symbol for underdog people living in poverty, giving them hope and proof that it could be done, a fighter fighting for more than just a heavyweight title, Brandi Carlile represents not only women, but the LGBTQ+ community.

A win for her is a win for her communities.

“Don’t think that you can come for me without your Sunday best.
I’m a tried and weathered woman but I won’t be tried again!”

[Champion – Bishop Briggs](#)

[Sunshine – Matisyahu](#)

[Champion – Matisyahu](#)



In Exhibition: Champion Zoë Buckman

[Keep Ya Head UP – 2Pac](#)

2Pac, like DMX, Eminem, and other rappers, is a heavy influence for boxers and is often in boxing training playlists and ring walks. His song Road 2 Glory was dedicated to Tyson and used as his entrance walk.

2pac is a rare breed and spoke to intellects and hedonists alike. And while all his views were expressed with eloquence, the way he treats women's rights in this song is stark contrast to the majority of the rap and hip hop world.

"Ladies, keep ya head up."

[Hurricane – Bob Dylan](#)

The song tells the story of boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter's imprisonment, the racism surrounding it and the racial profiling he endured.

[Boom Boom Mancini – Warron Zevon](#)

Included in the Boxing Hall of fame, Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini is a lightweight boxing champ. Retiring, Mancini headed into sports commentary, acting, and opened two production companies as well as a cigar company.

An avid fan of boxing and once an amateur boxer himself, Bob Dylan hired Boom Boom Mancini to be his sparring partner.

Zevon, a fan and friend of Mancini, wrote this song as a tribute to Mancini whom he felt was unfairly blamed for the death of Korean fighter Kim Duk Koo.

It contains the lyric: "They made their hypocrite judgments, after the fact."

Who Killed Davy Moore – Bob Dylan

Another boxing song from Dylan. Dylan wrote this song in response to the death of the boxer 4 days after he lost his featherweight title to the Cuban Sugar Ramos. His question is largely rhetorical.

Davy Moore – Phil Ochs

In contrast to Dylan, Ochs lays blame for the death on boxing's greedy promoters, money men, and the paying public.

The Hitter – Bruce Springsteen

The song tells the tale of a rather unlikable character whose only means of communication is through brute force. The story is framed by the character's visit to his mother. The song is designed to make the listener aware that monsters of men are not born battering rams of brute force, they all originate from somewhere.

The Boxer – Simon and Garfunkel

Some of speculated that The Boxer was an "attack" toward Bob Dylan, because of his boxing days and the chorus of "lie -la -lie" suggesting Dylan was lying about his intentions in music. Written by Paul Simon, The Boxer, provides a first-person account of loneliness and poverty in NYC followed by a sketch of a boxer. When asked about the song, Simon revealed that the inspiration for the song came from the Bible and from his own battle with critics, which he felt were being harsher than they needed to be.

"I think the song was about me: everybody's beating me up, and I'm telling you now I'm going to go away if you don't stop."

Originally the iconic "lie-la-lie" was meant to be a placeholder, however Simon decided to keep the line in when they began recording.

Fun Fact: Art Garfunkel met his wife Linda during the recording of this song.

Boxing – Ben Folds Five

Inspired by his father's love for boxing, Ben Folds pens a hypothetical monologue addressed to Sports announcer Howard Cosell. The monologue is from Muhammad Ali's Perspective as he considers retiring from boxing.

Louisville Lip – Freakwater

Before he became known as "The Greatest," Muhammad Ali was known as "The Louisville Lip." Born and raised in Louisville, Kentucky, Ali maintained a close relationship with the city throughout his career. The nickname was in reference to Ali's self-hype verbal stylings.

[The Eyes of Roberto Duran – Tom Russell](#)

Second only to Jack Johnson, Panamanian world champion Roberto Duran competed over a span of five decades. In 2002 the boxing publication *The Ring* named Duran the fifth greatest boxer of the last 80 years. Known as “Mano de Piedra” (Hand of stone), Duran held championship titles in four weight classes and is considered one of the best Lightweight fighters in the history of boxing.

[Salvador Sanchez – Sun Kil Moon](#)

The band is named for the Korean flyweight boxer. This song is about the Mexican featherweight champion who became world champion at 21 and was tragically killed in a car accident two years later.

[Yellow Ledbetter – Pearl Jam](#)

One of the most iconic guitar riffs that would inspire many other guitarists, Yellow Leadbetter was written around the time of the Gulf War. It tells the story of young man whose brother goes off to fight in the war. The young man stays at home and pursues artistry and activism and then gets the Yellow Letter announcing his brother’s death. He is rattled and unsure what to do, what step to take, and is caught in the boxing match of grief, shock, and the need to connect. When he sees a young couple on their front porch with an American flag. He waves at them as if he was waving to his brother. The couple returns a repulsed “who are you?” response, furthering the young man’s feelings of alienation and the emotional boxing match his heart is undergoing.

Vedder sings: “And the reason oughtta leave her calm, I know I said I don’t know whether I’m the boxer or the bag.”

[The Greatest – Cat Power](#)

The title track of Power’s Album, *The Greatest*, the song sings of the desire to be the greatest, the ability to remain invincible and the deluge of defeat. The Album cover sports two tiny gold gloves hanging from a chain necklace. Cat Power is far from a stranger to defeat, struggle. Like many other notable artists she has fought her way through life in several different dimensions.

The song explores the theme of defeat.

After all, even “The Greatest” Muhammad Ali experienced defeat.

[J’ai Mal a La Tête – Serge Gainsbourg](#)

(not available on spotify – YouTube Link)

The song sings of a boxer who made a lot of money in boxing. Has lost it. And now has a headache.

[Prizefighter – Britt Warner](#)

This song employs the metaphor of boxing, specifically a defeated boxer, as it relates to the end of relationship.

[Prizefighter – Trisha Yearwood, Kelly Clarkson](#)

In contrast, Trisha Yearwood's Prizefighter is an upbeat look at being knocked down, and still choosing to bounce back.

[Fight Song – Rachel Platten](#)

"This is my fight song. Prove I'm alright song. Take back my life song. My power's turned on. Starting right now I'll be strong. I'll play my fight song. And I don't really care if nobody else believes. 'Cause I've still got a lot of fight left in me."

[Hit Me With Your Best Shot – Pat Benatar](#)

"So go on and hit me with your best shot!"

[Tubthumping – Chumbawamba](#)

The greatest prizefighter fight song. "I get knocked down, but I get up again. You are never gonna keep me down..."

[Fight for your right– Beastie Boys](#)

To parrrrrrtttty!!!

[Y'all Must've forgot – Roy Jones Jr](#)

Roy Jones Jr. has held multiple world championship titles in 4 weight classes: middleweight, super middleweight, light heavyweight and heavyweight. He is the only boxer in history to start his professional career at light middleweight and go on to win a heavyweight title. As an amateur, he represented the United States at the 1988 Olympics and won a light middleweight silver medal.

[Gonna Fly Now – Bill Conti](#)

Also known as the Rocky Theme Song

[Living in America – James Brown](#)

Though a musical legend, James Brown's Living in America saw a resurgence in popularity after it was used heavily in Rocky IV.

[What's Going On – Marvin Gaye](#)

"War is not the answer for only love can conquer hate.



In Exhibition:

WAR IS NOT THE ANSWER TO FEEL SOMETHING REAL

By Jeffery Gibson

A beaded punching bag with “War is not the answer to feel something real” worked into the beadwork. The piece evokes the Marvin Gaye song as the punching bag is transformed into art, into something beautiful, into something protected.

“Don’t punish me with brutality.”

[Boxers – Morrissey](#)

Morrissey released this song ahead of a tour of the same name.

[Every Day is Yours to Win – R.E.M.](#)

“Walk the walk and talk the talk
And the tick-tock clock
With the rock and roll”

[Right Off – Miles Davis](#)

This nearly 27 minute track is a Tribute to Jack Johnson. Known as the “Galveston Giant” Johnson fought at the height of the Jim Crow era. The first-ever Black world heavyweight champion, Johnson began a legacy for black fighters. The defeat of the white boxer James Jeffries in the July 4th “Fight of the Century” sparked massive riots across the country. Two years later Johnson became a target of the government as he began to gain fame as a black man married to a white

woman. They arrested Johnson for violating the Mann Act, which forbade one to transport a woman across state lines. It was a racially motivated unjust charge. Johnson fled the country and continued to fight for seven years. He eventually served his sentence in 1920.



In Exhibition:

Adventures of The Greatest, Jack Johnson

Fab 5 Freddy

A portrait bedazzled with Swarovski crystals, Fab 5 Freddy's portrait suggests that Jackson is a larger-than-life figure who still shines bright.

[Tomorrow \(Saïdo\) – Salif Keita](#)

Part of the soundtrack of *ALI*, featuring Will Smith, *Tomorrow (saïdo)* is sung by the “Golden Voice of Africa” Salif Keita. A member of the Keita royal family of Mali, Keita was ostracized from his family because of his albinism. Later he would place a further distance between him and his family in pursuing music which was prohibited for people of noble status. Keita later fled Mali during political unrest, where he was greeted favorably by an international community.

[Float Like a Butterfly – The Disco Biscuits](#)

[Bee Noises](#)

“Float like a butterfly...sting like a bee.”

[We Didn't Start the Fire – Billy Joel](#)

[Main Theme \(The Story Continues\) – John Williams \(Return of the Jedi\)](#)

[Why do you fight? – Pinar Topak](#)

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Strike Fast, Dance Lightly: Artists on Boxing, Sag Harbor. Photo by Gary Mamay