

myTunes

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California Dreamin'

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It's January. The holidays are over. And if you live in the Northern Hemisphere, like I do, it is cold and hopelessly gray. We trudge through our daily routines in layers of clothes, unable to remember when we last saw the sun. And our only "excitement" seems to come from wondering how bad rush hour will be in the latest round of snow. The winter blahs are a disease, but there is a cure. Here are some artists to brighten up your days with a dose of musical Vitamin D.

One of the bands I love to turn on when the sun shuts off is **Best Coast**. Hailing from Southern California, their music is pure surf rock-inspired, alterna-pop goodness. (They get bonus points for having

quite possibly the best LOLCat-starring video ever for their single, "Crazy for You.") Their new EP, *Fade Away*, came out last fall. Their two other albums, 2010's *Crazy for You* and 2012's *The Only Place*, will help you have your own beach party in your living room.

Then there's **The Thrills**—the Irish band that made a California record. Their album *So Much for the City* (2002) never fails to put me in a better mood. "Don't Steal Our Sun" is my winter mantra. And "Santa Cruz" reminds us that sunny days are "not that far."

Another favorite band of mine for a pick-me-up is **Bad Veins**. The expansive optimism of the chorus to their song "Gold and Warm"—"I wanna hear your heart beatin' loud/ And I wanna see you stand up proud"—can pull me out of a funk. And their latest album, *The Mess We've Made*, is as brilliant as a summer sun at noon.

Of course, you can't lose with classics like **The Beach Boys** (I mean, they invented sunny surf-

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pop, right?), or "Good Day Sunshine" by **The Beatles**. But you may not have heard of a contemporary of theirs, **Emitt Rhodes**. From Hawthorne, California, he made great records in the '60s and '70s and then dropped off the map. For years I scoured bins at record stores trying to find his stuff, until his record company finally released all his songs, remastered, on *The Emitt Rhodes Recordings 1969–1973*. The songs "Fresh as a Daisy," "You Take the Dark Out of the Night," and "Let's All Sing" will get you moving and smiling, maybe even despite yourself.

And if the music doesn't pull you all the way out of the doldrums, look at it this way: maybe we need this down time—these short days and long nights—to reflect, to slow down, and to look inward. Maybe, like nature, our spirits have to go underground awhile to truly blossom. But hang in there. The sun will come back! +