

# 1972

## The Longest Year Ever

### January

#### **Nuclear Seasons – CharliXCX**

In a misguided and unfortunate rush to play ball with the big kids, Pakistan's president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto announced on January 20<sup>th</sup> that Pakistan would immediately begin a nuclear weapons programme.

This song's retro-sound suites this backward thinking by the president. We shouldn't forget that Canada participated in "nuclear cooperation" with Pakistan for years after this announcement was made.

### February

#### **Astronauts – One Eskimo**

On February 4th the NASA satellite Mariner 9 sent pictures of Mars from its orbit around the planet. It was the first spacecraft to orbit another planet but had to wait a few months for dust storms to pass before it could send any pictures back to Earth.

Later in the month on February 21 the Soviet unmanned spaceship Luna 20 landed on the moon, and then returned to Earth 5 days later with 55 grams of lunar soil.

Back in 1972 the idea of being an astronaut was the stuff of fantasies, with nations rushing to lay claim to extraterrestrial findings and discoveries. This song nicely captures a floating sensation, like you're slung out in icy space, fumbling along until something drags you back down to Earth.

### March

#### **Topknot – Cornershop**

India's army was instrumental in helping Bangladesh defeat the Pakistani army. After their successful adventure, they sat together around a roaring fire, tipped glasses in salute, and signed a friendship treaty on March 19, 1972. Their relationship has been a roller-coaster ever since.

Nothing like a bright sunny Cornershop song.

### April

#### **Badfish – Sublime**

John Fairfax crossed the Atlantic ocean in a solo row effort that took 180 days in 1969. Not content to "sit around" on land, he reached out to someone who had responded to his personal ad in 1969 – Sylvia Cook. The

two of them hit the San Franciscan waves and became the first people to row across the Pacific ocean, arriving in Australia 361 days later – on April 22, 1972. Sylvia Cook also then became the first woman to row across an ocean.

Imagine what that personal ad must have said. “Wanted: travel partner with extreme upper body strength, eats very little, weighs no more than 100 pounds. Must love eating fish. Slightly rebellious is ideal. Are you a badfish too?”

## May

### **Sorrow – The National**

The Burundian Genocide against the Hutu begins; more than 500,000 Hutus die. The carnage went on unabated through the month of August. By then virtually every educated Hutu element, down to secondary school students, was either dead or in flight.

Sorrow won.

## June

### **Lullaby – Leonard Cohen**

It was Thursday, June 15th when Dougal Robertson, his wife, three children, and a family friend, were sailing on their yacht Lucette. The boat was suddenly attacked and sunk by orca whales approximately 200 miles west of the Galapagos Islands. The group of six people on board escaped to an inflatable life raft and a solid-hull dinghy with little in the way of tools or provisions.

Using the dinghy as a towboat powered by a jury-rigged sail, the group made its way towards the doldrums, hoping to find rain there so they could collect drinking water. They did so successfully, while catching turtles, dorado, and flying fish to eat. The inflatable raft became unusable after 16 days, so the six people crowded into the three-metre long dinghy with their supplies. They then continued to use the wind and current to their advantage, moving to the northeast towards Central America. By their 38th day as castaways, they had stored dried meat and fresh water in such quantities that they intended to begin rowing that night to speed their progress. However, they were sighted and picked up that day by a Japanese fishing trawler on its way to the Panama Canal.

Robertson, who had been keeping a journal in case they were rescued, recounted the ordeal in the 1973 book *Survive the Savage Sea*, which served as the foundation for the 1991 film of the same name. The Calgary Library has a copy of this book (currently available too, shelf # 363. 123 ROB), should you be so inclined as to read it. Apparently it is an excellent recounting of the adventure and includes neat little details like how they used turtle oil for enemas. Not for the squeamish I suppose.

In other exciting news, an extra leap second (23:59:60) was added to the end of the month.

Truth be told June 15<sup>th</sup> was probably the longest day of the longest year for Sheila and Raymond Bridger. They awaited the arrival of their first-born son, heir to their kingdom and the apple of their eye. Arrive he did, and the world was a better place for it.

Remember singing your first lullaby to your first child?

## July

### **Fragments – Thievery Corporation**

July 25 – U.S. health officials admit that African-Americans were used as guinea pigs in the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male.

This kind of thing makes me speechless. Fiery, angry-type speechless. And Sad. The song weaves, bobs, and jabs like an angry siren singing her alluring aria.

## August

### **Star of Wonder/None Shall Pass – Tor/Sufjan Stevens**

Celestial events abounded in August. It started with a huge solar flare (one of the largest ever recorded) that knocked out cable lines in the U.S. It began with the appearance of sunspots on August 2; an August 4 flare kicks off high levels of activity until August 10. To top it all off, on August 10 a brilliant, daytime meteor skips off the Earth's atmosphere due to an Apollo asteroid streaking over the western US into Canada.

This is all just bad-ass astronomy, the subtle and pensive practice being able to strut its stuff. A mashup much like the TOR remix of Stevens' song: peacock-worthy bravado with an undercurrent of pensiveness and consideration.

## September

### **Dog Days Are Over – Florence and the Machine**

On this day a new era began: Bob Barker hosted the first "The Price is Right" episode on CBS, ushering in a new era of neutering and spaying pets. The Dog days were, in fact, over.

## October

### **Joy – Daniel Lanois**

Joy comes in all shapes and sizes, kind of like penises and vaginas. On October 1 of 1972 Alex Comfort's "The Joy of Sex" was published. A new wave of joy was validated for millions of people. Harmony ensues.

## November

### **Human – The Editors**

November 28 – The last executions in Paris, France. Roger Bontems and Claude Buffet – the Clairvaux Mutineers – were guillotined at La Sante Prison. Bontems had been found innocent of murder by the court, but as Buffet's accomplice was condemned to death anyway. President Georges Pompidou, in private an abolitionist, upheld both death sentences in deference to French public opinion.

Great to hear about politicians listening to their constituency. Too bad the constituency had it wrong. Was the end of executions a realization that humanity itself is something to cherish – more so than revenge or justice? Humanity may be primal, it may be dirty, but it is what we make of it.

## December

### All About Time – Tim Booth

On December 24<sup>th</sup> the US decided to spread the joy of Christmas by temporarily halting the bombing of North Vietnam. It just seemed uncivilized to slaughter people on such a holy holiday. Priorities, man. It is not about faith, it is about time. I wonder if they held off on Boxing Day to, to let the bombers take advantage of the electronics sales ...

Speaking of time, a second leap second was added to the end of the year (23:59:60), officially making it the longest year ever.

# 1972

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So there it is – 1972 as described by a series of completely unrelated events and happenings. 1972 was anything but dull – and was certainly monumental for the Bridger family.

I hope it brought you some laughs and some deeper thoughts on your birthday. You're not even halfway through your life yet. Reflect back on the enormous breadth of accomplishments you've achieved over those 4 short decades. In many ways you're just getting started. You have much to be proud of, and I hope you take some time to pat yourself on the back. Steel your loins, suck in your gut and get ready for what comes next – your forties!

Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday Paul!

Much love and respect,

Kirk