



Krukowski and Yang with their *Galaxie 500* bandmate Dean Wareham in 1988, and a still from Yang's film, *Fortune*



COURTESY OF NAOMI YANG AND DAMON KRUKOWSKI

bands like the Velvet Underground and Joy Division. "When we started, it was the beginning of indie rock, before it got codified by major record labels," Yang says. "And it was an irresponsible thing to do—there wasn't any way you were going to make any money. It wasn't the popular form of the day; it was what the freaks did." At the time, both Krukowski and Yang were in graduate school at Harvard, studying comparative literature and architecture,

respectively. They dropped out to give their full attention to the band.

Four years and three albums after it began, the Boston-based *Galaxie 500*, a pioneering influence on "slowcore's" dreamy sound, broke up abruptly in 1991, when Wareham left on the cusp of a major-label deal and what might have been mainstream stardom. "That was the path we were tentatively considering," Krukowski says, but "it fell apart amid all the pres-

ures"—like a movie star dying young, offers Yang, with mystique intact.

Afterward, the couple, based in Cambridge, fanned out artistically. They began performing as Damon & Naomi. They launched their press, *Exact Change*, reviving out-of-print books focused on "Surrealism, Dadaism, Pataphysics, and other nineteenth and twentieth century avant-garde art movements," including works by Louis Aragon, Guillaume Apollinaire, Gertrude Stein—"basically," Yang says, "books Damon was reading in Widener Library and couldn't go buy his own copy.... We wanted to make these available to people."

Meanwhile, Yang moved into filmmaking. "All of a sudden it was like being hit by lightning," she says. "It's a wonderful thing to discover, in mid life, something that you never thought you would do, and to find this passion for it. It's like, in a used bookstore, finding a whole other section." She's directed music videos for other artists, and in February 2015 released *Fortune*, a gorgeous and evocative 30-minute silent-film study of filial grief, laid over an original Damon & Naomi soundtrack. With a visual sensibility not unlike her musical one, Yang's videos are stylish and emotive, full of metaphorical possibilities.

For Krukowski, who's published two volumes of prose poems, a consuming interest is the digital shift that upended the creative worlds he and Yang inhabit: music and publishing. A fellow this year at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet & Society, he is at work on a book of essays on that topic. The book's discussion, he says, reaches beyond the much-lamented economic fallout for musicians when listeners stopped buying albums and began streaming music online—though it covers

## Chapter & Verse

Correspondence on not-so-famous lost words

**Dan Jacobson asks** if anyone can provide definitive attribution for the assertion, "From the music they love, you shall know the texture of men's souls." That line, he writes, is quoted in the 1949 movie *The Passionate Friends*, where the character played by Trevor Howard states, "I copied it out a book of Galsworthy's to impress you."

**"a bad 15 minutes at the end"** (January-February). Laurence Senelick replied: "The quotation seems to be a literal if awkward translation of the French catchphrase *un mauvais quart d'heure*. The notorious highwayman Cartouche (1693-1721) is supposed to have remarked, after he was sentenced to be broken on the wheel, "A mauvais quart d'heure is soon over!" It became proverbial very quickly. In his *Système de la nature* (1770), Baron d'Holbach extended it to the axiom that "Most criminals envisage death as merely un mauvais quart

d'heure," and Cartouche's remark is quoted verbatim in Antoine Servan's *Le Soldat citoyen* (1780).

**"My Little Papaya Tree"** (January-February). Michael Saxton wrote, "Try Googling 'and a mynah bird in a papaya tree' to get a Hawaiian version of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas.' I heard this long ago on The Midnight Special, WFMT, Chicago." According to a 1979 article by Michael Scott-Blair of the Copley News Service, quoting UCLA folklorist Joan Perkal, the list runs: 12 televisions, 11 missionaries, 10 cans of beer, nine pounds of poi, eight ukeleles, seven shrimps a-swimming, six hula lessons, five big fat pigs, four flower leis, three dry squid, two coconuts, and...."

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