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A LONG TALK

Wolf Parade Is Available to Play Your *Heated Rivalry* Rave

They haven't made much money from "I'll Believe in Anything" streams, and that's okay.

By *Marah Eakin*, *a freelance reporter who covers pop culture*

12:00 P.M. SAVE

"The days of the Shins getting paid a million dollars to have 'New Slang' placed in a McDonald's commercial or Hyundai forking over six figures for a Modest Mouse song are over," says Wolf Parade's Dan Boeckner (right) with bandmate Spencer Krug. Photo-Illustration: Vulture; Photo: Astrid Lyre

You may not know Wolf Parade, but if you've watched *Heated Rivalry*, you definitely know their music. Scoring a few key moments in the show, including Scott and Kip's big kiss on ice in episode five, "I'll Believe in Anything" has been on near-constant rotation in the heads of loon lovers since late December, backing everything from TikTok fan edits to sweaty, scream-filled nights at the club.

The track's resurgence after 20 years is — to paraphrase Ilya Rozanov — a pretty good trick, set into motion by *Heated Rivalry* screenwriter and showrunner Jacob Tierney, a longtime Wolf Parade fan who had the song in mind for the show for so long he even wrapped bits of dialogue around its phrasing. (Kip's friend tells him he should be in a relationship that gets "sunshine," for instance.)

It's also a welcome development for Wolf Parade itself, which has ridden a fairly constant wave of indie-rock struggle and success since forming in Montreal in 2003. But does prominent TV-show placement still provide the kind of boost that came from an appearance at *The O.C.*'s Bait Shop or an M&M's commercial in the early aughts? We talked to Wolf Parade's Spencer Krug and Dan Boeckner to find out.

Spencer, the story about how your song ended up in *Heated Rivalry* is essentially that, decades ago, you met with Jacob Tierney to talk about doing music for a project he was working on, which never happened. He said he'd keep Wolf Parade in mind for the future, and 20 years later, he kept his promise. But 20 years is a long time. Do you remember that meeting?
Spencer Krug: I do remember it. He and I had drinks at the back patio of Casa del Popolo in Montreal one afternoon. We were talking about me doing the music for one of his first films, *The Trotsky*. It's about a kid that thinks he's Trotsky or something along those lines. Anyway, it didn't work out for reasons I can't even remember, but there wasn't any bad blood. It was just a timing thing, or maybe he thought I didn't have enough experience making music for film. He was a super-nice guy, though, so he was like, "Hey, I'm gonna circle back to you later in life." It was a very big circle, but he did eventually come back.

And then how did the actual license come about? Did your management say, "Hey, we got this offer"?
Dan Boeckner: We work with this publishing company, Third Side, who are based out of Montreal, and they have always done really well by us. It's not a big corporate office, and they're sort of family-based. They all come from the DIY music scene.

Generally, when we get pitched stuff, it goes through them and they'll say, "Hey, guys, there's a Canadian movie and they can only give you $1,000, but they would like to use this song," and we'll say yes or no. But this one was different in that Jacob had outlined exactly how he wanted to use the song, where it was going to be placed in the narrative context, and what beats it was going to hit.

I don't think I've ever really seen that in a licensing pitch before. Obviously, I knew Jacob's work with *Letterkenny* and *Shoresy*, but it struck me as something cool and different, considering a lot of licenses are treating film like there's this fire hose of content of series and films mainly on streaming platforms. Over the last five or six years, as the recipient of a lot of these license requests, it feels like not a lot of care is being put into the construction of these things. This felt very, very different. For me, at least, it was an easy yes.

SK: It felt really intentional. You could tell he cared about the song, too. He wanted *that* song, which made it an easy yes. It wasn't like, "Well, if this doesn't work and they say no, we'll ask a different band." I think if we said no, he would have had to change the script.

Maybe that's why he put so much work into that pitch. He needed it to happen.
SK: I mean, once we read the pitch, there was no real chance we'd be saying no. And anyway, it sounded like a really unique show, and we're happy to be part of it.

It doesn't seem like the budget for the show is enormous, and from everything I've read, it doesn't seem like the sort of 2006 "fuck you" money you'd get for doing some M&M's commercial is out there anymore …

DB: The days of the Shins getting paid a million dollars to have "New Slang" placed in a McDonald's commercial or Hyundai forking over six figures for a Modest Mouse song are over.

So a six-episode Canadian series isn't paying for your kid's college?
DB: No, but I think Jacob honestly did the best he could with what they were working with. It wasn't an insulting offer. And again, like Spencer said, there was so much intentionality behind the pitch that either way, it was a no-brainer.

The whole soundtrack for the show is pretty interesting too, because it was a thing for a while where people were intentionally picking songs to sort of shape or enhance the aesthetic of a series, but for a lot of new series, they have these kinds of scattershot licenses now.

SK: Or they just want to use the instrumental tracks of songs to play in the background, which is a very common license that happens with us, too. Like, "We like this beat and your guitar riff, but we don't want your pesky words in the way of our dialogue, so we're going to make it instrumental and it's gonna play in the background while these two characters are talking in a bar," which is fine. But like Dan said, it's not like you're making a soundtrack to pair with your whole vision.

Are you seeing an additional monetary bump from the show going wide and playing in Europe and everywhere else? Or is it just, "Here's the one payment and that's it"?
SK: It's the latter. We're paid our fee and they call it a day. It's done. There are no royalties after the fact. But as far as visibility online through social media and streaming, there's a bump that's ongoing as the show comes out in different countries across the world. That's really nice.

There's this stat out there that says that streams for "I Believe in Anything" went up by 3,000 percent after Heated Rivalry came out, but — and this is no shade to you — I sort of doubt you were doing 10 million streams a month on that one song before the show. What is the practical implication of that 3,000 percent bump, and what has that meant to you guys? I read something where, Dan, you said that all these streams still only mean something like an additional $215 per band member.
DB: I don't think we know yet. It's too soon to tell. Wolf Parade is such a strange band because we're basically pre-Instagram, right? And then, the year that Instagram really took off, we decided that we were going to stop playing shows for four or five years. We're in this weird position where we do sell a lot of tickets if we play shows live and we have a lot of fans, but we didn't really have a big social-media presence. We still don't have a big presence in terms of followers on various platforms.

For Spotify, though, the basic math there is that a million streams equals $3,000. Half of that belongs to the record label, and half of that belongs to the band, so you do the math.

It's hard to even know, really, where people are taking in your song. Yes, there's the Spotify math, but is it also, "I've watched this clip 3 million times on TikTok," and the song's in there? Does the band see any portion of the song being used there, assuming it's embedded into whatever video and not just in the background?
SK: Funny you should ask, because we've been asking the same thing to all kinds of people in the industry because there is a huge uptick in activity there. But no one really knows! No one can say! It's a mystery, and I think even when we do finally get some statements that come along with whatever payments, it'll be so blended in with the other numbers that it'll be hard to know. Like, at no point are we going to be able to say, "TikTok gave us this much money for this song." Maybe we're never meant to know.

How's your upcoming Canadian tour selling? Have you noticed an uptick in ticket sales there?
SK: The few shows that are up for sale, there might have been an uptick in ticket sales. They were on track to sell out anyway, but one still isn't completely sold out, so it's not like the whole world rushed to buy Wolf Parade tickets. Granted, they're in sort of rural Ontario, so there's a limited audience there, too. But we're also putting new shows together for Canada and the U.S., and I think there's been an influx of offers to our booking agents that are maybe a little higher than normal.

No offers to play a *Heated Rivalry* rave?
DB: Not yet, but we're available!

SK: We should redo the whole record to techno. That seems like a good idea for those raves.

DB: I will say, on my own social media, I started noticing a little bit before *Heated Rivalry*, like over the last two or three years, that there's a renewed interest in Wolf Parade from younger people who like "live band" music. Like, music that's not bedroom-produced. I feel like this is kind of breaching the mainstream with Geese, but angular-rock music is back in the Zeitgeist for younger people.

The last couple of years, I've had people in a few different bands be like, "Hey, I'm 24 years old and I love Wolf Parade. All my bandmates like Wolf Parade. Thanks for making these records." A lot of them seem to like the second record we made the most, too. Then, after *Heated Rivalry* blew up, too, I've noticed a lot more younger people talking about the band. Also, people who listened to the band in college and who may have become less active music listeners are also remembering and coming back, too, which is really nice.

I suppose we can (rightfully) shit on Spotify, but it is nice that if someone young hears about a record and wants to check it out now, all it takes is a couple of clicks to find it. They don't have to track a record down or put in some order at the library.
SK: I think it's rad. What they've actually done is flattened everything. Like, our drummer, Arlen, has a daughter who's 16 and he said, basically, for people her age, if a song's a year old or if it was made in 1973, that's the same thing to them. It's all just part of the shit that's on the internet from a long time ago. So you have kids that have never heard of the Beatles, but that's just because they haven't crossed their algorithm yet. They don't care, and they shouldn't care. It's kind of a neat neutralizer. It evens the playing field in a weird way.

Spotify sucks because it doesn't pay artists, but there are *some* cool things about it.

DB: The benefit of that is also that maybe the next generation, or Arlen's daughter's generation, will finally be free of our parents' musical tastes. Oh my God. Wouldn't it be so fucking amazing if there were a generation of kids who had never heard of the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, or "Hotel California"?

Spencer, you told *The Globe and Mail* that you felt some distance from "I'll Believe in Anything," just because you wrote and released it so long ago and sort of moved on with your life. Has the song's resurgence in popularity given you a new appreciation for it or a new perspective on why people love it?
SK: I've been playing it a lot more because I put together a solo piano version for a recent show I did in Vancouver, and now I'm entertaining recording that version to release. So, in that way, I've been dissecting the lyrics a bit more and changing them. I'm also thinking about how Wolf Parade is going to play it live. We've always played it live anyway, — it makes pretty much every set we do — but now we realize that we're going to have to continue to play it.

Yeah, where does it go in the set?
SK: I almost want to put it first and get it out of the way, but then everyone would leave.

DB: I keep thinking about how I saw Chumbawamba at a European festival, who are basically this anarcho-punk band that had an accidental hit. They played "Tubthumping" three times during their set. They played it at the beginning. They played it stripped down in the middle, and they played a raucous version at the end.

SK: Oh, yeah, I keep thinking about the *Simpsons* bit about Bachman-Turner Overdrive where BTO goes to Springfield and they're like, "We're gonna start with some new stuff …"

DB: … and then the crowd is like, "No, play 'Taking Care of Business'!" and then the band gets sad and starts playing it, and the crowd is still like, "No, get to the actual 'Taking Care of Business' part!"

SK: Yeah, all they want to hear is the chorus.

Hopefully that won't be the case for you.
SK: We have very kind fans, and a lot of them are heads that want to hear the deep cuts, but obviously, "I'll Believe in Anything" will still be on the roster. It's funny, though, because as I've been rerecording stuff, I've been changing some lyrics because, I mean, I wrote the song when I was 25 or something, and nothing had happened yet in my "career." I never expected more than 20 pairs of ears to hear the song. It was just for me and my shitty band and our friends. And then eventually it was like, "Oh, people around Montreal are hearing this. Oh, now people around the continent are hearing this, and now it's going on a record." But you never go back and change the lyrics.

Twenty years later, I'm like, "You know what? This is my song. If I want to change this lyric, I'm doing it, because this line is a little bit dumb." It's funny watching people try to cover the song on TikTok, because they get to these words that don't make any sense and they start making up their own lyrics, which are just as bad. But I can't blame them, because my shit didn't make any sense at the time either.

DB: All of this has led me to realize that I've been singing this song wrong for 20 years.

SK: You've been singing "both legs"?

DB: I've been singing "both legs," buddy. Singing my heart out every day.

What are people getting wrong?
SK: In the first couple verses, there's a line, "We've both been very brave / Walk around on bowed legs," like a bow-legged cowboy.

DB: That's not how I heard it.

SK: Fair enough. Most people just hear "both legs," for obvious reasons. And then the next line is "wait for the scary day," but for some reason, that gets changed to "fight for the scary day." I have no idea why. We're trying to actively clear up this misinformation.

You guys have seen the show. Do you think the song makes sense within the story line? Are you like, "Yeah, this is the vibe I was feeling when I was writing this song" or "This is the bigness that I imagined"?
SK: The short answer is yes, I think they pair well together. The song is charged with good feelings and hope, and it runs the risk of coming off the rails at times, like it's a little unhinged, but it kind of never does.

The song is written in the most cliché happy key, C major, like it's all these big, all-white notes with no sad chords. And when we get to that big moment, it's like, "We're doing it! We're gonna make it to the end of the song." I think that sentiment is reflected in the show, and I think that's why the show is resonating with people so much right now, because there are so many moments where things could go shitty for the characters, but in the end, they're met with kindness and understanding. That's something the world really needs right now. It's a happy ending, and even if it's just fiction, it's a reminder that people can be good to each other and it's okay to hope for good.

I also think some of those good feelings are happening because the people who made the show seem to be actually good people. Dan, do you agree? I saw a tweet you made in regards to Hudson Williams saying "fuck AI" where you said, "Feeling 100 percent vindicated with the Wolf Parade license."
DB: I couldn't have really asked to be involved with a better show.

One thing I am personally happy about is that I grew up in a very small logging town in Canada in the '90s, pre-internet. I think things have gotten slightly better for kids, but the social hierarchy in my town was hockey players at the top, and those guys — not all of them, but most of them — were pretty fucking shitty to everybody else. They loved to use the F-slur to describe anyone who wasn't in their social circle. Being part of queering hockey feels very good to me. I really enjoy seeing people holding up signs calling the hockey rink "the boy aquarium" and asking players to kiss each other. It makes me happy.

I don't know that sweeping social change is coming to the NHL anytime soon, but maybe "I'll Believe in Anything" can become the "Seven Nation Army" of hockey games and let queer fans and allies in the crowd know that they belong there.
DB: It feels like a win. To Spencer's point, the show and the song both feel joyful and feel like a tightrope walk, but then you stick the landing. I think the reason people put a lot of their heart and hope for change into the media right now is because they don't have their hands on the levers of power. For most people, it feels very difficult to change anything, and this gives them a little bit of hope.

Whether it's going to change hockey doesn't really matter. I think it's just the fact that it's making people feel good and, like you said, if we can knock Jack White off the charts and we don't have to hear that bass line again, great. How about something new, right?

MORE 'HEATED RIVALRY'

- *Heated Rivalry*'s Cinematographer Shot the Show for the Meme-Makers
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LATEST NEWS FROM VULTURE

BAD TAKES | 3:56 P.M.
Fired Real Housewives Have Opinions About Bad Bunny Are we surprised?

MOVIE REVIEW | 3:00 P.M.
Finally, a Smooth-Brained *Wuthering Heights* Emerald Fennell's Emily Brontë adaptation is brave enough to just be about two messy bitches.
By Alison Willmore

ALERT THE DUDE | 2:28 P.M.
Are the Eagles Already Gone? Don Henley says 2026 will be their final year and warns fans: "I guess they'll just have to listen to the records."

REVIEW | 1:30 P.M.
Bad Bunny Made MAGA Look Stupid He refused to let a baseless culture war over his halftime show be the story.
By Craig Jenkins

PHANTOM SCORES | 12:59 P.M.
Paul Thomas Anderson Requests That *Melania* Remove *Phantom Thread* Score Composer Jonny Greenwood was not consulted before Universal agreed to license the music.

AP-PAUL-ING | 12:31 P.M.
Jake Paul Thinks We Care What He Thinks About Bad Bunny He defended his decision to call Bad Bunny a "fake American" in a tweet that his own brother, Logan Paul, criticized.

LINKUPS | 11:15 A.M.
Bad Bunny Has Always Been a Little Monster Lady Gaga's feature moment in Bunny's halftime show felt like part of a larger mission for queer inclusion.

VULTURE 10X10 | 5:00 A.M.
The Broker Puzzle 5-Down, Eight Letters: Sequence in "Babygirl" or "Basic Instinct"

VULTURE GAMES | 5:00 A.M.
Cinematrix No. 685: February 9, 2026 Can you name a Best Picture-nominated Robert De Niro movie?

VULTURE GAMES | 5:00 A.M.
Telematrix No. 101: February 9, 2026 Can you name a Pamela Adlon TV comedy?

SUPER BOWL 2026 | YESTERDAY AT 10:13 P.M.
The Best Super Bowl 2026 Commercials So Far Yorgos Lanthimos scores two ads this year — is Emma Stone in both?

OVERNIGHTS | YESTERDAY AT 10:00 P.M.
***All Creatures Great & Small* Recap: Down at the Dog Track** It's an amazing episode for Siegfried and Mrs. Hall shippers — complete with sexual cribbage innuendo.

LOVE WINS | YESTERDAY AT 9:46 P.M.
That Was a Real Wedding During Bad Bunny's Halftime Show "The only thing more powerful than hate is love."

SUPER BOWL LX | YESTERDAY AT 9:41 P.M.
There's Nothing Bad to Say About Bad Bunny It'll take work to tease a negative takeaway from that Super Bowl halftime show.

LIVIN' LA VIDA LOCA | YESTERDAY AT 9:40 P.M.
Ricky Martin Makes His First Super Bowl Halftime-Show Appearance Bad Bunny invited Martin to sing the chorus of "LO QUE LE PASÓ A HAWAii."

FAMOUS FRIENDS | YESTERDAY AT 9:23 P.M.
Who Got Invited to Bad Bunny's Super Bowl Casita? Alix Earle? Jessica Alba?

Earle? Jessica Alba?

RICK DALTON POINTING MEME | YESTERDAY AT 8:02 P.M.

[*Rick Dalton Pointing*] Wait, Is That Cliff Booth? The Super Bowl gave us the first look at the David Fincher–directed sequel to Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time … in Hollywood*.

VULTURE FASHION | YESTERDAY AT 7:44 P.M.

Stars Flock to Thom Browne's Pre–Super Bowl Fashion Show *Heated Rivalry*, *Industry*, and *One Battle After Another* were all repped at the *GQ* Bowl.

PROFESSOR PUTH | YESTERDAY AT 7:17 P.M.

Charlie Puth Nailed the Super Bowl's Hardest Song He gave Puth through the night that our flag was still there.

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