

# Marry Me, Mark Hoppus

Vanessa Mancos

When I was thirteen I was a Dork with a capital D. I know, I know; everyone says that about themselves, but I really was. I *enjoyed* spending my weekends doing things like making elaborate scrapbooks and watching old movies with my parents. My looks didn't help my case either. After my Literature class finished reading "The Diary of Anne Frank" kids took to yelling "Holocaust!" when I passed them in the halls (because I was so skinny, not because I committed atrocities against humankind). A group of girls in my French class voted me "Most Immature." For no reason. It wasn't school wide Mock Elections or anything. It was just, like, a vote that they held privately and then decided it'd be cool to share aloud. God, teen girls are such bitches. So who could blame me for seeking out an escape where no one would judge me, or make fun of me, or hold a vote on how much I sucked? And I found it, in the unlikeliest of places: the catchy pop pseudo-punk tunes of Blink-182.

I first heard "Feeling This" on the radio. For whatever reason, Tom DeLonge singing about the moments before, during, and after sex with a woman he's romantically involved with spoke to me. Sure, I was a virgin who'd never had a boyfriend but I wanted somebody to feel the same way about me that Tom felt about that girl. Of course, I immediately went home and downloaded the entire album illegally on Limewire. I don't know if you remember Limewire or not, but it was an absolute shitshow as far as song organization went. People would name files whatever they wanted and you'd end up with multiples of songs recorded badly off the radio from Finland. You'd also have to spend about five hours waiting for one song to download. That just wasn't going to work. I needed the cool artwork from the linear pages and to know what the guys wrote in the thank you notes and the actual names of all the songs I loved. I needed the real deal. So I devised a plan for my mom to drive me an hour away to the mall so I could purchase the album at Sam Goody. When I finally had the album in my possession, I spent all my spare time listening to its tracks over and over. In order to memorize every lyric, I got out my glitter gel pens and my fanciest scrapbooking paper and painstakingly copied down the words in my best handwriting, then hung the finished products over my desk in my bedroom: it was a kitschy reminder that somewhere out there, somebody understood.

I was so obsessed with Blink-182 and their namesake album that, in my junior year of high school, I started a band of my own with my two best friends so we could *become* the next Blink-182. We called ourselves Toxic Shock Syndrome. Unsurprisingly to everyone but us, we were horrible and broke up after less than six months together. But that's a story for another day.

Before you judge me too harshly, you have to remember this was the early aughts, the height of the pop-punk moment. This is pre-Tom DeLonge going on rants about aliens. Travis Barker was the first non-prison inmate I'd ever seen with a neck tattoo. Mark Hoppus had frosted tips and little black-rimmed glasses that reminded me of all the cool beatnik writers I was just starting to read. What I'm trying to say is these guys had it. Going. On.

I'd rush home from school so I could be sure to catch Blink's latest video on TRL. When Mark Hoppus strummed his bass and leaned into the mic to sing his verses—his eyes squinting with a mixture of passion and mischief—it was like he was singing to me. Suddenly, I wasn't the dork nobody wanted to be friends with; I was the girl from their



Blink-182

"Feeling This"

Blink-182

11/2003

Geffen

songs. I felt beautiful. I became the cool girls in their videos who knew how to skateboard and threw bonfires on the beach in California for fun. Plus, Tom and Travis and Mark were *funny*, you know? They made fun of boy bands in their videos and I made fun of boy bands alone to myself in my head. It was like we were soulmates.

A lot of kids at my high school loved Blink, too. So many, in fact, that during a school-sponsored battle of the bands contest, one of the lead singers of yet another Blink-182 high school knock-off band sang "I Miss You." It was like I was hearing the words out loud for the first time in the absolute worst way possible. The performance was nasal and theatrical and my escape-world was shattered. Is that what I sounded like when I sang along to "I Miss You?" *Hello there, the angel from my nightmare...* But those lyrics were so deep! It didn't even matter to me that at the time I hadn't lost someone I really cared about and therefore couldn't actually relate to the song on a personal level. I just knew it made me feel good to lay on the floor next to my twin bed and sing along to all of the words.

The incident at battle of the bands made me realize that in becoming so deeply obsessed with overdramatic lyrics about emotional pain, I was closing myself off from the world. There were no friends on the floor next to my twin bed. So I started to dial back on my love for Blink—at least publicly. I made some new friends and started to realize that maybe singing along to super sad lyrics about Stockholm Syndrome is not how most teens wanted to spend their Saturday nights. Don't get me wrong, I still love Blink—their music was so comforting to me during a formative time in my life. But I learned to keep my love on the DL. I kept it so far on the DL that when I was in my 20s and dated a man who was also Blink-182 superfan, I refused to admit my love for the band even to him.

Some years later, while living in Los Angeles, I saw a flyer for something called "Emo Night" at the Echoplex. It's a night of emo music that Mark Hoppus himself sometimes DJs. There are so many nostalgic Blink fans, so many *mes*, that there is a monthly event with a cover charge and a line around the block to get in. Just picture it: a room full of adults screaming and dancing along to the melodramatic lyrics that got us through our most awkward years.

I still haven't been.