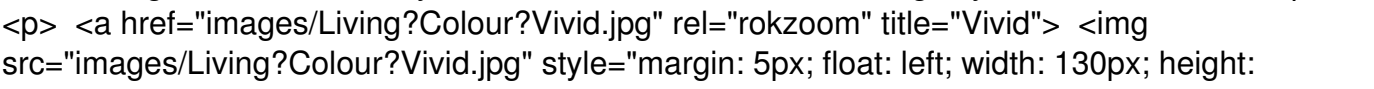


The power of self-expression takes many forms - it could be writing, it could be art, it could be poetry. There is some surreal element to any form of creativity that grabs your heart or turns you on your head. And so much of the response is purely timing - your mind is ready, primed, and waiting - and BAM it hits you like a ton of bricks. And it changes your world forever.

 One of those prime examples for me is the band Living Colour. This is a band that made a resounding echo in my soul, for reasons that defy explanation.

At first glance, I probably wouldn't have discovered them on my own. They formed in 1983 in NYC and were a wild mix of reggae, funk, free jazz, punk, hip hop and hard rock. This all-African-American "funk metal" band was in the same genre as Jane's Addiction, Faith No More, Primus, and (the great) 24-7 Spyz. At the time, it wouldn't have been a band that I would have thought that I would have gravitated towards - until one day ...

In 1988, they released their first album, "Vivid" (released May 3, 1988) - and one of the videos, "Middle Man", was in regular rotation by MuchMusic VJ Michael Williams (MuchMusic being the Canadian "equivalent" to MTV).

As fate would have it, my friend (and fellow musician) Terry picked up the album - and I won't forget the first play of it. Good gawd - that was something that definitely grabbed me by the throat, spun my head around, and turned my musical ear on it's proverbial ear! It was a perfect example of hearing the right music, in the right frame of mind, at the right time in life.

"Vivid" would also produce the classic "Cult of Personality". The song starts with a sample of a speech by Malcolm X ... *"... And during the few moments that we have left, . . . We want to talk right down to earth in a language that everybody here can easily understand."*

And then there was that first guitar riff by Vernon Reid - so gnarly, so nasty, so ... in your face. As were the lyrics ...

[Neon lights a nobel prize
A leader speaks, that leader dies
You dont have to follow me
Only you can set you free](http://www.lyricsfreak.com/l/living+colour/cult+of+personality?20084475.html "Cult Of Personality")

And it all ends with a sample of a speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt ... *"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."*

They produced a distinctive blend of socially-aware lyrics, citing issues relating to racism, inner city problems, and popular culture, mixed with an eclectic fusion of diverse musical styles performed by four fine musicians. They certainly weren't quiet, lyrically or musically. Perhaps that was part of the intense appeal - for me at least.

Living Colour opened for the Rolling Stones in Toronto in 1989, and what a memorable show it was - even if I was at the opposite end of the football field from the stage! I saw them one other time - in about 1992 or 1993 - at the Texas Union/Cactus Cafe in Austin. A much more intimate environment made it all the more intense and exceedingly enjoyable.

They released two more albums, and were awarded a total of four Grammy awards. By 1995, they were no longer, a product of "musical differences" as they prepared their fourth album. A sad day in my musical world.

I thought they were long gone ... but then I was told that they did in fact have a web site ([http://www.myspace.com/livingcolourmusic](http://www.myspace.com/livingcolourmusic "http://www.myspace.com/livingcolourmusic") and [http://www.livingcolourmusic.com/](http://www.livingcolourmusic.com/ "http://www.livingcolourmusic.com/")). Apparently, they put the band back together on December 22, 2000 and are expecting to release a new

Living Colour ... Is Alive And Vivid | Allan Besselink

Written by Allan Besselink

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album in early 2009. </p> <p> And today, through the power of the Internet, I found this ... a live show from November 1, 2008: </p> <p> Living Colour - Live♦ </p> I recently loaded some of their songs onto my iPod ... and lo and behold, that same intensity struck me as it had so many years ago. The power of self-expression ... lasts forever. What a beautiful thing ...