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WORD OF MOUTH: SAO MIGUEL ISLAND, AZORES

FROM VOLCANIC THERMAL BATHS TO INCREDIBLE FOOD AND MUSIC, THIS LITTLE-KNOWN LOCATION BOASTS MORE THAN EXPECTED

Ross Belfer 21 November 2016

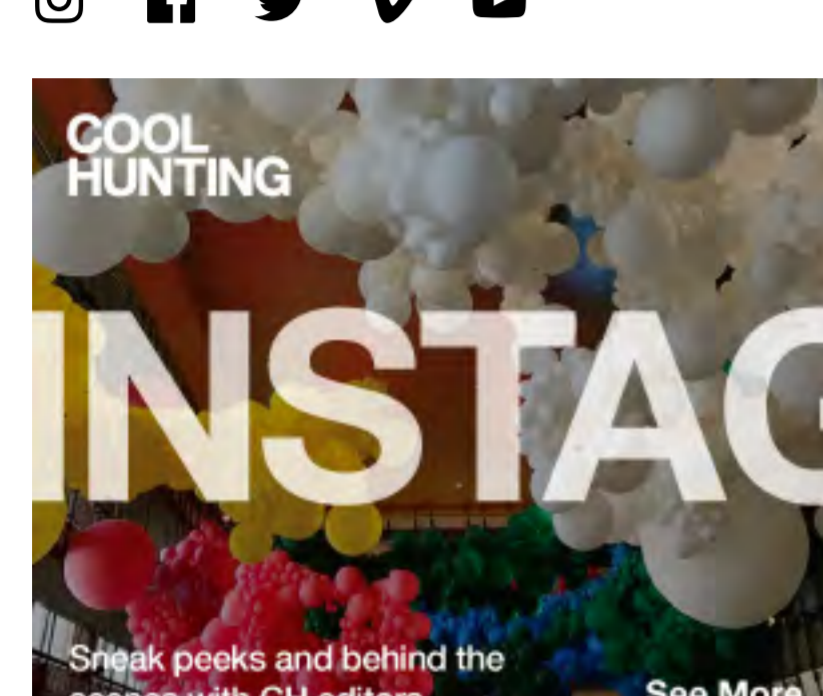


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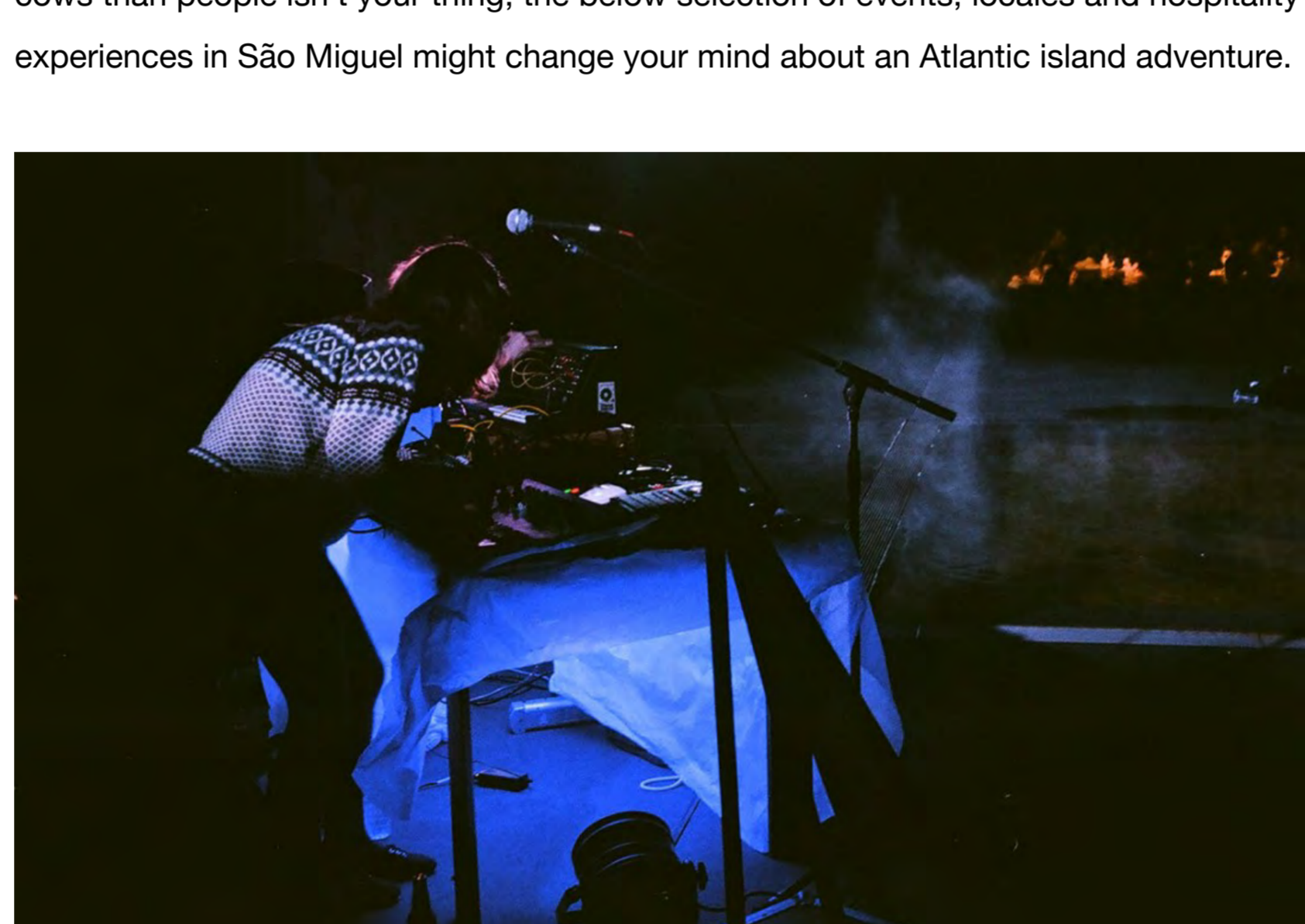
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Jettisoning across the Atlantic Ocean is a familiar experience if you're a travel nut, but rarely do we ponder the infinite unknown—or in this case, the tiny archipelago that dots the swathe of sea in between North America and the European frontier. Smack in the middle of the Atlantic lies the Azores archipelago and São Miguel, a 287-square-mile island comparable to the "Hawaii of the East" where an entire world of unspoiled, verdant nature, thermal water pools, world-class surfing and hiking, seafood and a unique Portuguese-islandic charm rivals the most inspiring destinations in the world—and beckons the attention of travelers looking for a true respite from the urban grind. If 300+ dormant volcanos, including the surreal beauty of Lagoa Azul y Verde, and more cows than people isn't your thing, the below selection of events, locales and hospitality experiences in São Miguel might change your mind about an Atlantic island adventure.



Tremor Music Festival

Bringing together genre-defying musical artists from Portugal, Europe and North America in a landscape that blends "Jurassic Park" with the architectural charm of Lisbon or Porto is the genre-defying Tremor Music Festival. The esoteric four-day gathering centers around the island's main town of Ponta Delgada, and treats attendees to a slew of acts, all within historic edifices and outdoor venues across the island. Attendees should also expect surprise performances in volcanically heated thermal baths on the edge of the ocean and surprising venues from football fields to skate parks. The perfect autumn time compliment to the annual Walk and Talk festival taking place each July and September, Tremor will soon release its April 2017 line-up.



Pico do Refugio

Thurston Moore, filmmaker Cláudia Varejão and photographer Daniel Blaufuks have all taken refuge at the artist residency-meets-boutique guesthouse known as Pico do Refugio. Spread over several hundred acres of tea farms with handsome flats designed by Lisbon-based architect Luis Bernardo Brito E Abreu, this stunning plot of land has been owned and maintained by Abreu's family for more than 350 years. It boasts an outdoor pool for scuba diving lessons, along with verdant vistas and for breakfast there's a homegrown soft white cheese wrapped in banana leaves that cannot be obtained elsewhere on this magnificent island.



A Tasca

Lemon and butter-doused shrimp and scallops, lamb chops roasted with thyme, and classic Azorean dishes such as Lapas, or limpet clams, served sizzling on a skillet with ample garlic—the menu at A Tasca is mouth-watering. Nestled into a tiny square on São Miguel, the restaurant beckons travelers and locals alike. The knockout dish of sesame-coated albacore tuna and a flaming glass of local brandy is ample incentive to bring diners back again and again. During the annual Tremor festival, A Tasca also moonlights as a venue for performances, with a stunning upstairs space that hosted the likes of Ricardo Martins and Alec et Les Japonaises in between bites of savory Azores delights.

Solar da Graça

São Miguel's mainstay music venue, Solar da Graça is a two-tiered venue, bar and restaurant transformed from a 300-year-old horse stable with a mezzanine offering a bird's eye view of the ground-shaking performances taking place during Tremor festival, including a celestial set by Juliana Barwick in 2016. Owned and operated by Victor Cruz, an Azorean singer, humorist and radio personality, Solar da Graça is located directly adjacent to the Ponta Delgada outdoor/indoor food market and a recommended fueling station for traditional Azorean dishes like Bacalhau, Arroz de Mariscos, Frango Assado and Lombo de Porco Assado.

Volcanic Thermal Baths (Furnas, Ferraria)

No trip is complete without a little relaxation. São Miguel boasts plenty of accessible thermal pools and baths. A surreal experience that won't break the bank (approximately €3-5 entrance fee), visitors should aim to descend into Ferraria, a manicured pool that literally sits on the edge of the island where the Atlantic creeps up on its contours; or Furnas, a series of four smaller pools surrounded by a verdant, jungle-like landscape in a quaint and quiet town in the center of the island.

Images by Ross Belfer

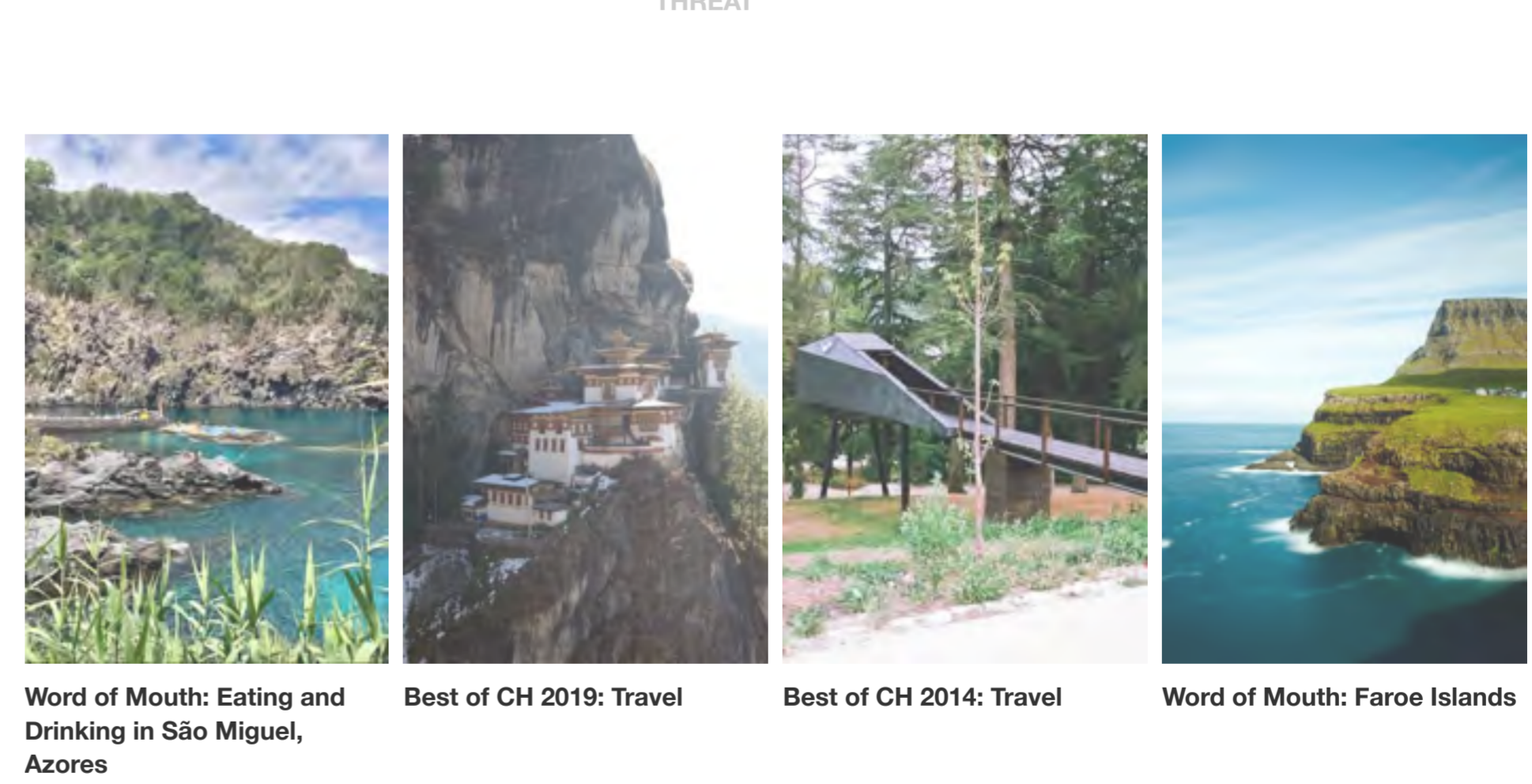
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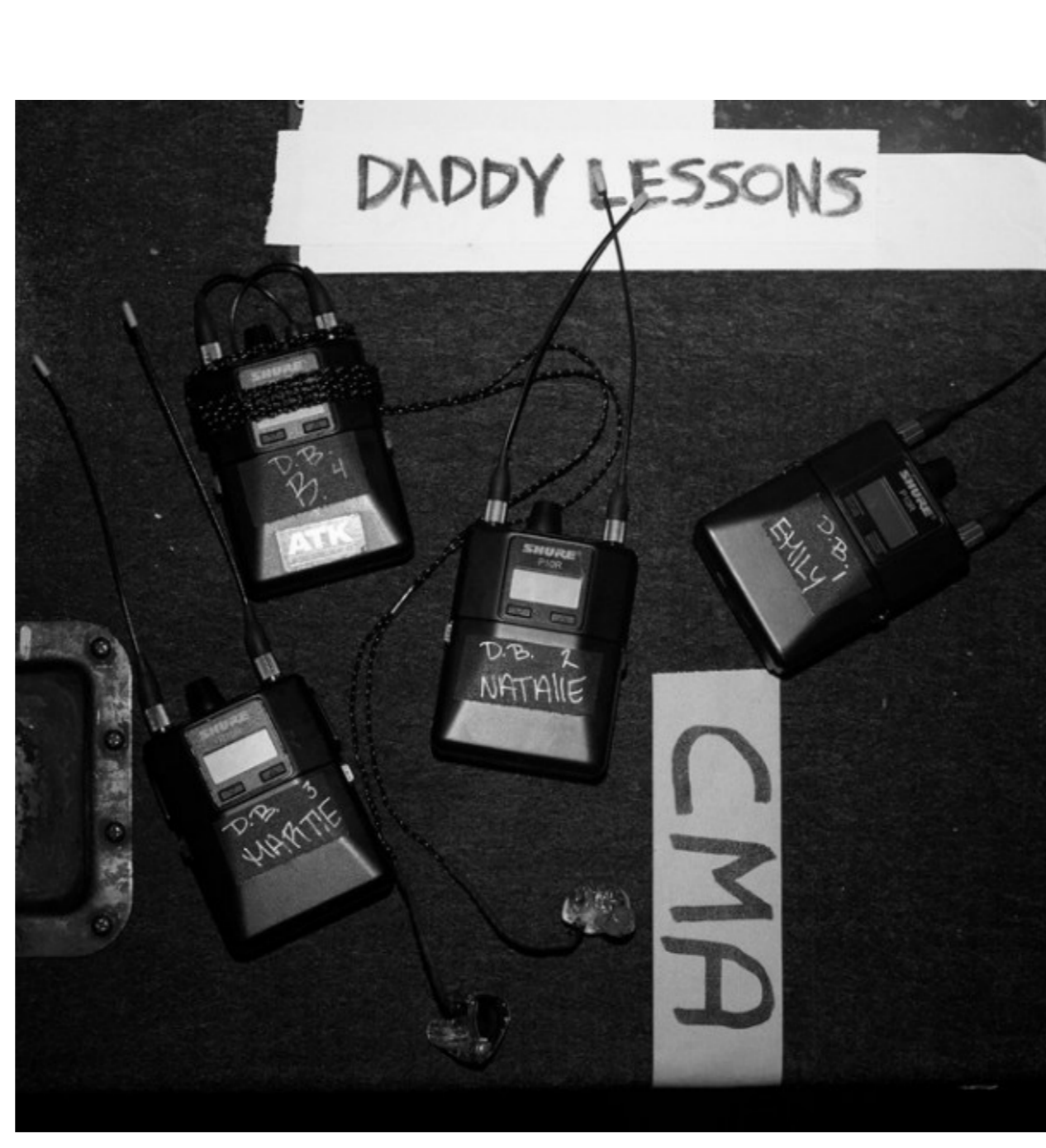
Katie Olsen 21 November 2016

From her fifth studio album, 1985's Hounds of Love, Kate Bush's "And Dream of Sheep" is lesser known than the record's other songs (like "Cloudbusting" or "Running Up That Hill"), but it is just as otherworldly and exquisite. For the video accompanying this new version, Bush spent three days in a tank full of water, performing an iteration that will appear on her upcoming live album K Fellowship: Before the Dawn which is actually a box-set of three CDs and four vinyls. Bush apparently ended up with mild hypothermia for this shoot (and recovered after a day to continue filming) but the result is quite magical.



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BEYONCÉ + THE DIXIE CHICKS: DADDY LESSONS

Katie Olsen 21 November 2016

While Beyoncé's Lemonade was released back in April, earlier this month she performed "Daddy Lessons" at the CMAs with country music trio the Dixie Chicks. The performance spurred some controversy (a lot of it racist), but it was undeniably brilliant. With Beyoncé's Southern roots showcased thanks to the song's rich storytelling and the Dixie Chicks lending their impressive vocals and musicality, this version of the track is now available to stream on Spotify (unlike the rest of Lemonade) and even those who think they're not fans of country music will be nodding their heads to this horn-heavy, murder ballad in no time.

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