

TUESDAY: ONE STRING

There aren't enough words to describe this genius who can do so much with a lone string. Brushy One String is the stage name of Andrew Chin, son of Jamaican musician Freddie McKay. McKay died in 1986 in his late 30s, leaving behind a body of work representative of the rocksteady (ex: Rock-a-Bye Woman) and reggae genres. While Brushy inherited his father's musical talent, he's parlayed into an interesting Rhythm-and-Blues-meets-Roots-Reggae crossover. Check out his website when you have a chance.

Wheels

- Volkswagen and USDOJ talking about criminal investigation (Deutsche Welle) – Up in the air yet whether DOJ goes with deferred prosecution or asks for a guilty plea from the lawmaker for criminal activity related to the promotion and sale of its so-called “Clean Diesel” passenger vehicles during the last decade. Criminal fines are estimated at \$1.2 billion. VW claims to be cooperating, but the company's failure to disclose the additional cheat software in the 3.0L engines suggests some problems understanding what “good faith” means.
- Volkswagen's Australian manager believes diesel fix

“imminent” (CarsGuide) – And “Under Australian law, we don’t believe there’s anything on our car which is illegal.” Uh-huh. Hence the fix for 80,000 1.6L and 2.0L passenger diesels. It’s true that Australia is not as strict about NOX as the U.S., but VW’s passenger diesels didn’t meet EU or AUS limits on other pollutants.

- Ford expects to offer self-driving car without steering wheel within five years (Detroit News) – Well, then. Better hope regulations don’t require a steering wheel, huh? Ford has also invested \$75M in LiDAR-maker Velodyne; Chinese search engine company Baidu has likewise made a \$75M investment. LiDAR is expected to provide navigational assistance for these self-driving vehicles.

Way Up There

- China launches satellite researching unhackable quantum communications (euronews) – This is a joint mission with Austria; few details are available about the technology on board

apart from the use of quantum physics in communications.

- SpaceX rumored to spend serious bucks on carbon fiber technology (Ars Technica-UK) – Carbon fibers are durable, withstand temperature extremes, and are lightweight, making them an optimum choice for space travel. The amount of SpaceX's speculated commitment to carbon fiber manufacturer Toray is \$2-3 billion – sounds like enough for a Mars mission.
- Not just for blockbuster sci-fi movies anymore: NASA approves robotic arm for asteroid mission (Phys.org) – The robotic arm intended for use in sampling and repositioning an asteroid as part of the Asteroid Redirect Mission (ARM) has been approved for next phase in development. The robotic component has an additional planned use in NASA's Mars mission as well.

Words

- Univision's bid wins Gawker Media (Recode) – Of the two known bidders – Ziff-Davis and Univision – the latter's

\$135M bid won bankrupt Gawker Media and its brands. Gawker's lineup joins The Onion and The Root, purchased by Univision, and Fusion which Univision originally created jointly with Disney and now owns outright. Founder Nick Denton seems pleased with this outcome as his brands and workers continue without disruption; billionaire Pete Thiel gets partial revenge on Denton for outing him by forcing the bankruptcy and sale. Univision's editorial policy will be less personal in its coverage – probably a good thing. Let's check back in a year.

- 'Not a good fit' says Barnes & Noble as CEO shown the door (GalleyCat) – Whoa. You don't see such blunt statements about CEOs, especially one with less than a year under their belt. The company's stock has been up though retail sales continued to struggle in competition against Amazon. Feels like there's more to this story. In the mean time, Ron Boire is out the door and executive chairman Leonard Riggio will

delay his retirement until a new CEO is found. Hope the next one can salvage NOOK tablet platform because I can't stand Amazon's Kindle.

- Turkish court closes pro-Kurdish newspaper Ozgur Gundem (Business Standard) – Claiming the paper was a propaganda outlet for Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), labeled a terrorist organization by Turkey, EU, and the US. The court said the closure was not related to the government's post-coup purge of media believed to be sympathetic to Gülen movement. An appeal is possible.

I-Spy: Cyber Edition

You've probably heard about the alleged hacking of a NSA server and the subsequent attempt to auction contents from that server. Edward Snowden offered his perspective on the situation – I've Storify'd the tweet thread for your reading ease.

The disclosure and attempted auction were likely done by Russia for political reasons given the timing. Hacking and accessing the contents of the server should be expected – it's ordinary spying, same as the U.S. does. But the revelation is a new tack; Snowden suggests it's a warning to the U.S. about potential future disclosures. Read the thread for yourself.

I don't think this hacking and disclosure happened in a vacuum. There's a much bigger game to puzzle out – add the meeting between Russia

and Saudi Arabia to “achieve oil market stability” as well as Russia’s express interest in Saudi Arabia’s plans to build as many as 16 nuclear reactors. Factor in a change in relationship between Iran and Russia now that Russia has deployed long-range bombers from Iran for the first time against ISIS. Russia, Saudi Arabia and Iran have some of the largest proven oil reserves in the world, all three in the top 10 and in Saudi’s case, influence over OPEC. Is Russia preparing for asymmetric economic pressure?

Late adder: #BlueCutFire in San Bernadino County, CA is very bad, now 82,000 ordered to evacuate.

That’s it for now, still Tuesday in the next time zone. Let’s see if I can make it over the hump earlier tomorrow.