

Gorgeous Portis

Ashley Cook

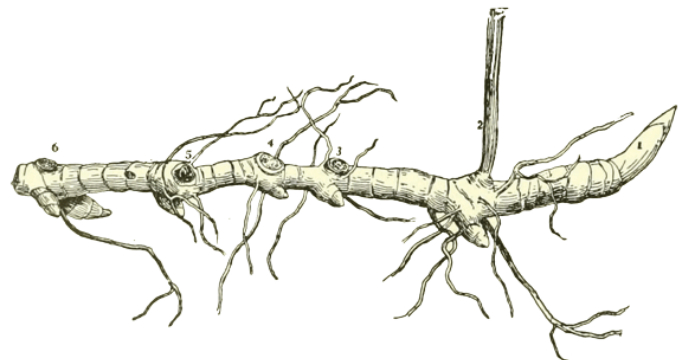
August 3, 2020

“Life is awesome, different is great, ugly is not tacky, ugly is ugly, ugly is not always attractive, ugly is ugly, ugly is good, there is no bad, just the rarely seen.”¹



Will U Stay Ugly 200? Original art courtesy of Gorgeous Portis. Archive.org

Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus, tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist who creates a “hideous sapient creature” in an unorthodox scientific experiment. Seeking the freedom to imagine beyond the bounds of the scientific establishment of the time, the mad scientist expresses, “it was very different, when the masters of the science sought immortality and power; such views, although futile, were grand: but now the scene was changed. The ambition of the inquirer seemed to limit itself to the annihilation of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded. I was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth.”² Gorgeous Portis is a mix maker and music producer based in Detroit, with various mixes available to the world through their presentation on Archive.org. The titles are abstract and confusing at times, using numbers as letters or as words, inventing new words or consistently using the word “ugly”; only by listening through the mixes can they reveal their particular methodology, with a kind of abstract reasoning used to guide the construction of these unique audio-based structures. Throughout these mixes, there seems to be a consistent attempt at de-categorization, breaking through the invisible limits of how music can function or be used, and only doing so with the utmost freedom of thought, association and expression. Like an expansive journey of not only entertainment but also learning, music from countries all over the world engage in intimate conversations, exchanging vibes and influencing each other the way the reality of visual and sonic aesthetics layer on top of one another in a poetically haphazard way on a street corner. Like Victor Frankenstein and his monster, Gorgeous Portis collects and puts elements together to bring to life a new kind of musical organism.



A plant with an underground reproductive structure.

https://etc.usf.edu/clipart/78500/78526/78526_rootstock.htm

“It’s apparent to me that a lot of things may appear as a game. And in fact, this is not a game. I want to shout out to everyone I know that’s in my circle that’s close to me that knows what’s really good, keep forward, don’t stop. I mean, this is a journey, I mean, we all started this at a young age, knowing that family may not get us, people may not get us around us, but in the end we’ll be around the people who do get us and understand. I encourage you, I believe that we are all in that place right now. So shout out Detroit, shout out wherever the fuck you live, shout out what you’re doing with all of your heart, shout out whoever you love, romantically and from the heart, shout out mothers, shout out fathers! Shit is hard right now! Shout out family, shout out you, shout out creatives, shout out squares, cause they kinda keep shit balanced too, in their own way, like without squares, how would you know what it is to be a circle, you know what I mean? Shout out to circle. This is *Ugly Space Ugly* aka *Ugly Stay Ugly*. As you take this in, remember, love is primary, everything else, secondary. That love can be external but first it must be internal. I’m just chomping on tortilla chips with some hummus dog...”³

Ugly Space Ugly/Ugly, Stay Ugly (4-19-2018) resembles a live radio DJ broadcast, mimicking the voice over commentary technique as a performative way of adding to the music being played, but with a type of spiritualistic perspective.

Layering music and commentary, artfully intertwining the voice within the lyrics of the artists and the expansive list of music sampled, ranging from hip hop to rap, to techno, electronic music, to experimental and back, in this two-hour mix, Gorgeous Portis combines the work of Lil Durk, Lil Bibby, Oneohtrix Point Never, Rockwell, Sun-Ra and His Interplanetary Vocal Arkestra, Spaceghostpurrrp, Sampha, Sylvia Striplin, Max B, 18+, Dean Blunt, 2Chainz, Lloyd, Mase, ARRN and Augustus Pablo!

“The truth is, there comes a time when you must look within. For some of us it’s everyday, for me it’s every day. I know things get twisted and turned, moods go up and down, people come in, people go out, people go up, people go down. It’s important to remember and to search and to discover, and to claim and to realize and to be proud of who you are, and that’s ugly. At times the sun, other times, hellfire, but if you can’t appreciate both, it might be hellfire for you, and that could be hellfire for everybody around you too!”⁴

29:30, *Black God* by Spaceghostpurrrp, the bonus track version.

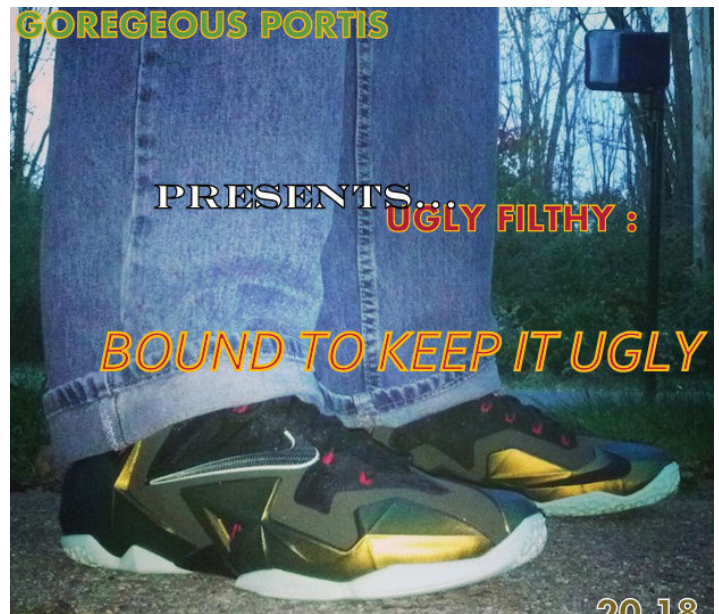
“And again, it’s way more than any of us. I know it feels like everyday it’s so much about us. We wake up and it’s like okay, what do I have to do? What do I need to do? Maybe for some of us it’s what do I need to do for someone else? But the truth is, it’s not! Before us there was, and after us there will be. Even if they’re, you know, a hybrid of what we are. Life is awesome, different is great, ugly is not tacky, ugly is ugly, ugly is not always attractive, ugly is ugly, ugly is good, there is no bad, just the rarely seen. I am ugly. A lot of shit’s poppin’ off. For a lot of people around me, none of that shit is really important, but the truth is, it is. Although it is the movie, the game, the policy, the newwwwwwwwws, you know you gotta call out names, sneak diss, no sneak diss. The news, politics and all that bullshit and that’s politics in every realm. Cause we’ve seen politics also exist in the creative form. If you suck someones suck, then they will suck you and spit you back and if you don’t then they’re mad, therefore you should have never sucked their suck, you should have just only stayed with your own. There’s a lot to learn still, we’re all still young, youth is in heart, not in age, although the body does recognize age. I believe it’s important to love yourself. By loving yourself you can learn how to love someone else more. By learning how to love someone else more you can spread that love to that person, then they to another and to another and to another and then we have a stronger world. To think that world peace is a dream, means that they’re winning. Whoever ‘they’ is, you know who they are. To think that peace within yourself is a dream, it means that they’re winning. Intuition leads us. Never ever has anyone said ‘oh my intuition had me do something crazy’, never. Crazy in a bad way. Love yourself, love the people around you. Love. This is not just a bunch of fucking purple and pink hearts. This is a real thing. Learn it, live it, it’s a life journey. Clearly we’re here for a reason and we’re here for that as humans. We go onto something else after this, whether we remember or not. I don’t think that matters, it might though. A moment of silence, for beauty, for peace, for woman, for man. Woman creates everyone that’s here, physically. And the universe controls it all. Understand, you should not be below as a man, or as a woman. You should understand yourself, live that truth, and spread that to who you see fit, when you see fit. They may not want it at that time, but you best believe truth speaks and sticks in your memory. Moment of silence. Shout out GP, shout out triple links, shout out Marcus Marcus, shout out ARRN, that’s double r-n, bless up. Bless up...”

...And we back!⁵

*Hesitant Oath,
Give Me Your Love,
Show Me Some Love,*

...alarm...ARRN.

There is an awareness of the performative and a utilization of its possibilities, and the techniques of this commentary trail throughout the library of mixes, at different levels. With heavy commentary, *Ugly Space Ugly/Ugly*, *Stay Ugly* and *The Ugly Episode 1* attempt to provide a philosophical platform that serves as a foundation for reasoning behind spiritual and curatorial as well as structural approaches to these mixes. But there are also many mixes with limited commentary or speaking; *Filthy Ugly* has a thorough introduction, but there are another six mixes that jump right into it, with no commentary, introduction, nothing. Just straight up! Creating a musical rhizome, continuously growing stems which put out lateral shoots and adventitious roots at various intervals, happening or carried on according to chance rather than design or “inherent” nature. Poetry from chance and resilience through flexibility and adaptation, through a sewing of one pure element into another, substantial tracks linked together, and usually with a seemingly deeply rooted spiritual drive. It would be safe to say these six commentary-less mixes are more traditional though, than the rest of the collection, at least in structure, as they move from one track to another in a relatively linear way.



Filthy Ugly Original art courtesy of Gorgeous Portis. Archive.org

The graphic design of *Filthy Ugly* (5-12-2018), as well as each other mix, in their own way, resembles classified ads in newspapers, with random blown out images collaged underneath an array of fonts styles, colors and sizes, like an overly aware graphic designer with analogue parody type sense of humor. The vibe of the design aesthetic echoes the way that the elements in the mixes are layered. This particular mix incorporates contemporary artists Rae Sremmurd, Future, Bankroll Fresh, Cardi B, Slim Jxmmi, Riff, Blackray, Swae Lee, Omar S, Actress and Art Blakey. It’s a mix for a slow roll through an urban or rural landscape, and does definitely compliment the dynamics of the streets of Detroit. With the delicate choice to sandwich Cardi B’s *Thru Your Phone* fluidly between the confident and energizing Bankroll Fresh’s *M.O.B.* and the bouncy Rae Sremmurd/ Future collaboration *Buckets*, the vibe in this one is tender bitter sweet. A quality of taste exists, whether it be from contemporary artists or those from different times; Gorgeous Portis has no apprehension to incorporate different genres, eras, styles, etc, making these mixes so rich in opportunities to learn about new artists and think about the ways that different kinds of music can interact. Especially in 2018, Gorgeous Portis’ practice has been prolific, with a release of 13 different mixes over the last 3 years, most being over an hour long and include consistent collaborations with ARRN and Marcus Marcus as well.

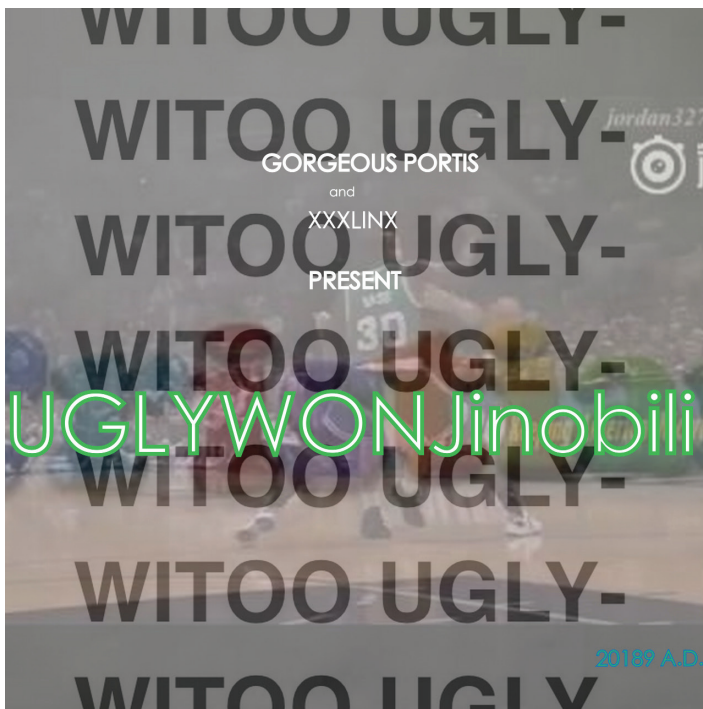
Gorgeous Portis

Ugly w ONjinoblii (12-12-2018), a 3Hour and 30Minute dance mix! No commentary.

“SO UGLY
SO STYLE
SO GUUD”⁶

Using time, space, and presence Gorgeous Portis weaves a world familiar yet distant. Welcoming breaks in the art, carving memorability in mind, Gorgy P, is in his pocket and spreading expansiveness in thought, you're welcome...

-XXXLINX



UGLYWONJinobili Original art courtesy of Gorgeous Portis. Archive.org

-LOVELIST-

“21:39 : Gemini - Untitled
21:52 : Gemini - Untitled
21:56 : Invisible System - Skunk funk
22:01 : 10 On the Edge (Ft. Z - Ro, Trey D, Barre, Dat Boy Grace & Solo-D)
22:04 : 10 On the Edge (Ft. Z - Ro, Trey D, Barre, Dat Boy Grace

& Solo-D)
22:09 : Jeanne Lee - Subway Couple
22:22 : Hieroglyphic Being - The Improbable World of the Unexplained
22:25 : Hieroglyphic Being - Unsolved Mysteries of the Past
22:31 : LA GOONY CHONGA - SANTERIA PU\$\$Y - o4 DONT CALL ME
22:35 : Lil Baby - For You [Prod. By BassGod]
22:36 : Mobb Deep - Allustrious
22:40 : Nicole - Pump It Up (Fantasy U.S. Reality)
22:44 : JUVENILE ft. Hot Boyz & Baby - U.P.T..mp3
22:57 : BLADE ICEWOOD- DETROIT ft Cash Out G ,Rock , O-Dog
23:01 : Trippie Redd - Gore
23:08 : Somnoroase Păsărele - FOTO DOI NOROS
23:10 : Bok Bok - Foxtrot (Neana Bootleg)
23:15 : Willow Smith - Marceline
23:18 : Lil Baby - For You [Prod. By BassGod]
23:19 : Jeanne Lee - Angel Chile
23:27 : Glenn Underground - Colouration
23:31 : Lee Gamble - Locked In
23:33 : Nonkeen - Glow
23:37 : Que - Shooter [Prod. by BWheezy]
23:40 : SUMS - Matha
23:41 : Yves Tumor - All The Love We Have Now
23:44 : Cam'ron - Instagram Skit (Feat. Tiff Da Gift & Daniel)
23:47 : Cam'ron - Instagram (Catfish) (Feat. Sen City)
23:50 : YOUNG SCOOTER - OG Snoop
23:52 : DJ KOLT & DJ PERIGOSO - Assabakuse
00:02 : NURI - groov
00:05 : 01 LIL BABY- 7 Days [Prod. By KrazyBlack]
00:15 : Nonkeen - Told and Small
00:19 : Carl Craig w/ Sarah Gregory - Wrap Me In It's Arms (New Age Pimp Mix)
00:27 : Lil Baby & Marlo - Rac Racing (Feat. Big36oz) [Prod. By Mercy]
00:34 : Steve Poindexter - Night Flight
00:44 : Zachg - Bad Man In The Shadows
00:46 : 55 - 55
00:49 : Tommy Lee - Mine Your Face
00:58 : Terrance Dixon - Untitled
01:00 : Cities Aviv - ALBUM: In The Form of 2 Songs - “Had To Get Up”
01:04 : Chief Keef - Nascar
01:06 : Actress - VISA”⁷

Ugly (dot) edu (5-8-2018), another steady mix minus commentary; 1 hour 6 minutes. *Ugly again 4 the 1irsttime* (6-18-2020), 26 minutes, no track list, another steady mix minus commentary. *Best Set Yet : Dtwg* (4-28-2017) another steady mix minus commentary, one hour and thirteen minutes. *2UFU* (5-25-2016), where cute turns to sweet turns to powerful, over and over again; including Genuwine *In Those Jeans* and Kid Cudi / Raphael Saadiq collaboration *Balmain Jeans* slowed down, 1 hour and 8 minutes, no commentary or introduction.

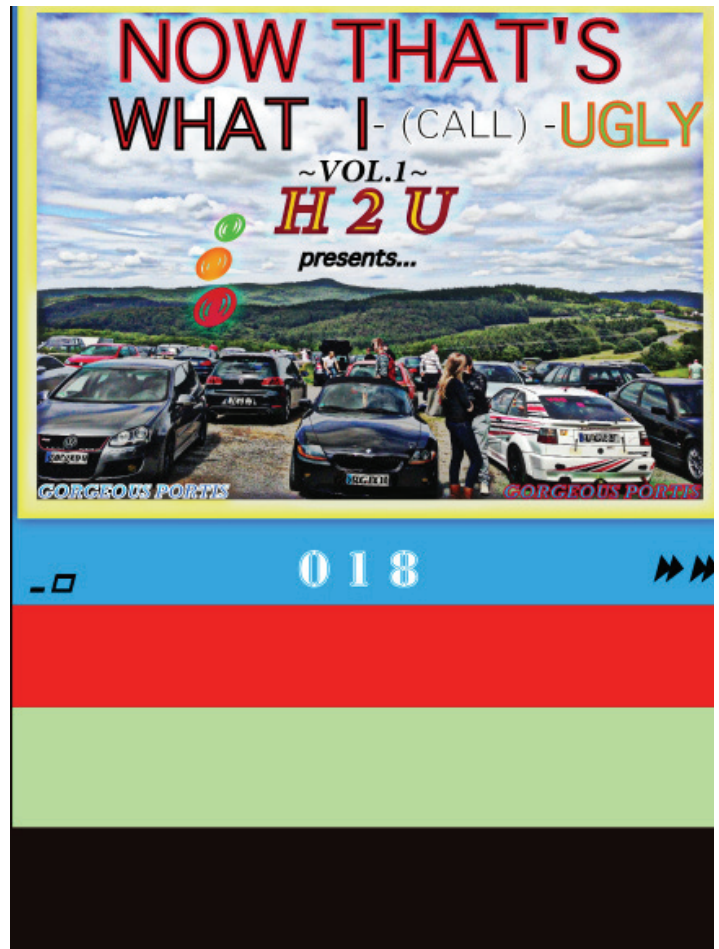


Image courtesy of Naruden Boonareesirichai

Pretty Ugly (4-26-2018) also no commentary or introduction, one hour and twenty-one minutes.

Now That's What I Call Ugly Vol 1. H2U, *Will U Stay Ugly 200!* and *Ugly Ass-Water: Man Robs Shrimp* are three mixes whose influence on mental processing could very well be illustrated by Alice falling down the rabbit hole, with a chair here, a couch here, a candlestick falling, gracefully, somewhat gently, however with an underlying sense of urgency. When nothing makes concrete sense, there are two roads; to observe and respond with open-minded curiosity, or to just shut it down and move on without experiencing it at all. A floating takes place for the curious, walls go down with unlearning and re-imagining. Expanding, laughing, being okay with confusion, appreciating ambiguity. The most surreal of all of the series, these three mixes are for that.

Now That's What I Call Ugly Vol 1. H2U (5-24-2018) initiated by robotic introduction, an incoherent conversation, and what sounds like a news story about a mom who recently discovered that her daughter goes to raves and decided to attend a rave to see what her daughter gets into. Breaking the storytelling into a techno track that compliments the speech of the reporter and mother, going in and out resembles a rave that has music so loud you nearly lose your hearing, sound wavering but continues regardless. The sounds and songs flow into one another seamlessly, from the chilled out rave right into *Runnin-n-Gunnin - If I Die [og tape]* by Tommy wright III, like driving in a car flipping through the different radio stations and finding random but good songs with each turn of the radio dial, going from Tommy Wright III to Talking Heads to Sun Ra to PM Dawn.



Now That's What I Call Ugly, Vol. 1, H2U Original art courtesy of Gorgeous Portis. Archive.org

Will U Stay Ugly 200? (4-25-2018) *Kansmie Anne Caught Over-Speeding*. Gorgeous Portis kindly includes all of the sampled tracks, carefully curated and mixed. Sometimes it's easy to just become lost in a thought while listening to the changes between songs chosen, *Kansmie Anne Caught Over-Speeding* into *Bambounou* by Fire Woman into...

The dynamics at play present a taste of the diversity of the world. It is clear that Gorgeous Portis sees any sound at all as sampleable, following, as a guide, the way thoughts actually happen, or the way dreams actually feel. The diversity of the elements that create a moment become a live musical all around, anything as musical material. An incorporation of the technique of collage highlights the continued influence of Surrealism even in these contemporary times, as collaging was a very important technique for the Surrealist movement aesthetically, conceptually and politically. Collaging different elements together naturally had, and still has, the potential to challenge and even dissolve boundaries that are otherwise very present within the foundational structures all around us. As the technique of collaging has actively been used throughout history of art and music, it continues to allow us to experience the poetry that can arise from the coexistence of things and the influence that diversity of styles, thoughts, things or people, have on each other. It challenges the categorization of the modern dogma, and the vetting process present that determines the worth of something or someone based on various factors put in place. The bizarre reality that collaging can bring to fruition is able to expose the vulnerability of rigid categorization, as just denying it or implementing efforts to challenge it can make the structures that seem so strong fall more easily than it ever seemed it would be. This reference to Surrealism is a subjective perspective, and the tendency for the collaging technique utilized by Gorgeous Portis could very well also simply be a result of existing within a Post-Modern society, topped with the influence of the ever-so-surprising world wide web and the sampling of music of our predecessors. Whatever the root influence is, it is certainly a productive use, and reflection, of the crazy age we live in.

Ugly Ass-Water: Man Robs Shrimp (4-26-2018) is an eerie, spooky composition, mixing, blurring, cutting and pasting. News interview about self defense, informative details about how to deal with muggers. "Don't break your stride, make noise, scream, whistle, women weaker...She's weaker... Moment that you're looking down, you are at ease...she's weaker...in my experience

women scream, grab her wrist...If someone comes up to me and asks for the time or for directions?..What should I do? Make noise. A woman one time had a whistle, airhorns...A woman one time had a whistle...He says the most effective weapon, men vs. women, that's a great idea. Mase. Would rather target a woman. Great Idea. Make noise, anything that makes noise. A woman one time. Have you been sprayed with mace? Important tip. Not in the purse. It was uncomfortable. Carry it on their hand, that's an interesting tip, carrying it in their hand. Not in the purse. Make noise. But David says one thing. Deter you. Some men fight back. Do you physically fight a mugger? Look at all windows before you open your door...On the subway platform to lower my chance of being a target. In the middle or around people. In the middle or around people. In the middle or around people. In the middle or around people. In the middle or around people.⁴⁸

Samples and thoughts becoming each other, floating calmly twisted; it could be the soundtrack to a thinking scene in a suspenseful action or science fiction movie. These three mixed compositions, *Now That's What I Call Ugly Vol 1. H2U*, *Will U Stay Ugly 200?* and *Ugly Ass-Water: Man Robs Shrimp* are the most immersively integrated grouping of tracks of the entire Gorgeous Portis collection.

The Ugly: Episode 1 (5-9-2020), as well as the radio broadcast collaborations with Marcus Marcus called *The Ore* use their platform to question, expressing thoughts, concerns and frustrations that are seemingly triggered by contemporary situations in politics and human rights. Currently, within the Covid-19 era, upcoming presidential election and robust human rights movement, these concerns are products of the times. *The Ugly: Episode 1* was composed as if there are two persons, three persons, many. Voices. Collectively creating commentary because these crises are contributing to chaos. Right now in 2020. As written, a precursor to the listening or a text to read and reflect:



1nce Ugly, Always Ugly 2: Original art courtesy of Gorgeous Portis. Archive.org

“1nce Ugly, Always Ugly 2: UGLY IS AS UGLY DOES

We are in the time now, to think, accept the truths, speak, and behave according to logic and what we know to be truth by the facts. The tests are over, we are living and affected more immediately by blatant displays of abuse to “obey” and “submit” through FEAR. While also more affected by our own words, actions and mindsets- seeing the physical results of these immediately as well. These are sensitive times on all planes.

WE HAVE THE POWER.

“Any attempt to separate the majority (population) from thinking for themselves and the minorities actions (gov’t) is an attempt at division and ill-intentioned control.

LOVE YOURSELF, LIVE for the times ahead. It is not about the pandemic, it is what the pandemic says about us collectively, going ahead. Our behavior and obedience thus far, is shameful. LET’S GET IT TOGETHER.”⁹

In contrast to the hopeful message above and the hopeful and inspiring nature of many of the other mixes, the vocal commentary initiating *The Ugly: Episode 1* presents some very dark vibes, with aggression, anger, frustration and an expression of feelings of hopelessness along with the usual sense of urgency. As the listener, it would be natural to ask “is it parody?”

As Gorgeous Portis verbally unloads in this piece, abrasively speaking to someone, (the listeners?) calling them slubs? Repeating the phrase as well as “shut-up”, swearing amidst a continuous rant; a refreshing thought would be that this is another attempt at illustrating an internal dialogue, recorded. And an even more refreshing take would be to find a comical edge to this, as it is layered otop of *Throat Chakra Healing Meditation 192Hz*.

The use of healing Hz mediations carries over into the ongoing collaboration with Marcus Marcus on 88.1 WHPR called *The Ore* (7 Episodes) (2019-2020) where the host MARCUSMARCUS, and SELECTOR GORGEOUS PORTIS create a space for healing, intellect, difference, and play.

Tune in to hear more from Gorgeous Portis at archive.org:

<https://archive.org/search.php?query=creator%3A%22GORGEOUS+PORTIS%22>

and in the live collaborations with Marcus Marcus at theore.space

or on WHPR 88.1fm, a radio station out of Highland Park,MI, by listening on FM88.1, WHPR.COM, or using the app by searching “WHPR TV NOW” in your mobile app store OR on Roku!

1 Gorgeous Portis, “Ugly Space Ugly/Ugly Stay Ugly” (Audio Track, https://archive.org/details/mglenn3_gmail_Usu1, 4-19-2018)

2 Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, 1797-1851. *Frankenstein, Or, The Modern Prometheus : the 1818 Text*. Oxford ; New York :Oxford University Press, 1998.

3 “Ugly Space Ugly/Ugly Stay Ugly”

4 “Ugly Space Ugly/Ugly Stay Ugly”

5 “Ugly Space Ugly/Ugly Stay Ugly”

6 Gorgeous Portis “Ugly w ONjinoblii” (Audio Track, <https://archive.org/details/UGLYwONjinoblii>, 12-12-2018)

7 “Ugly w ONjinoblii”

8 Gorgeous Portis “Ugly Ass-Water: Man Robs Shrimp” (Audio Track, <https://archive.org/details/UAWMRS>, 4-26-2018)

9 Gorgeous Portis “1nce Ugly, Always Ugly 2: UGLY IS AS UGLY DOES” (Audio Track, <https://archive.org/details/1-uau-2-cover>, 5-9-2020)

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